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INSIDE



Marianas Memorial

In memory of the Chamorros and Carolinians of the CNMI who died during World War II, the newly constructed Marianas Memorial will be dedicated with a special Mass at the American Memorial Park on Sunday.

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Milestones

A total of 233 students from the Chacha Oceanview Junior High School are now bound for high school after getting their promotion certificates Tuesday night.

Page 16



Extended Duty

Thousands of soldiers who had expected to retire or otherwise leave the military will be required to stay if their units are ordered to Iraq or Afghanistan.

Page 21



OPENING DAY PREPS

All is set, including rides, stage, and entertainment for tonight's launching of the 2004 Liberation Festival. Inset shows a technician putting on the final touches to the stage lights in preparation for tonight's event.

SHAN SEMAN

PUTC gives CUC ultimatum

Committee gives CUC until today to submit documents

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Expressing dissatisfaction over the current power situation, the House Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation and Communication is giving the

Commonwealth Utilities Corp. until today to submit documents that show

what is actually going on with Saipan's power system.

Failure to do so would force the panel "to take any and all actions it may deem necessary," according to committee chair Timothy Villagomez, himself a former CUC executive director.

Villagomez, in a June 2 letter to CUC board chair Herman P. Sablan and executive director Lorraine A. Babauta, said it

is unfortunate that, while they gave assurances at a recent public hearing about CUC having sufficient power capacity, the utility firm actually began power shedding across the island.

"Unfortunately...as recently as May 30, less than 48 hours from your assertions and assurances, CUC began power shedding, instituting 'rolling blackouts' across the island. These rolling black-



Villagomez

outs have continued since then, causing tremendous consternation among our families and the business community [and] adversely affecting the tourism industry," said Villagomez.

He cited that on June 1, the central

See PUTC on Page 8

BoS, MPLA ink deal on funds withdrawal

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The Marianas Public Lands Authority, which has the biggest government deposits in the Bank of Saipan, may now withdraw funds from the bank.

The camp of bank chairman Paul Calvo disclosed this development after BoS and

the MPLA reached an agreement providing for limited access to the funds.

"The agreement with the bank allows the MPLA to get a substantial amount right away," said Robert O'Connor, Calvo's attorney.

He said regular monthly payments would be made to the MPLA beginning this month. "In addition, based on per-

formance indicators, BoS will pay MPLA additional monies beginning 2005."

The MPLA has close to \$9 million in deposits with the bank, the biggest chunk of some \$15 million in government monies deposited with the BoS.

Of the total government deposits, some \$5.6 million belongs to the North-

See BOS on Page 8

\$10K worth of marijuana plants seized

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety seized last Wednesday several fully-grown marijuana plants with a total estimated street value between \$8,000 to \$10,000.

According to Crime Stoppers coordinator and DPS public information officer Sgt. Thomas A. Blas Jr., a total of 93 plants ranging in height from six to 12 feet were uprooted from a loca-

See \$10K on Page 8



Judge wants Brown's name in Stanley case

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Superior Court judge Juan T. Lizama yesterday reiterated his earlier ruling directing the Attorney General's Office to amend the criminal information



Brown

against ex-congressman Stanley Torres so it would bear the name of attorney general Pamela Brown.

Lizama issued the ruling a day after the AGO sought to clarify the judge's

See JUDGE on Page 8

Local

Contractor sues CPA over Tinian project

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

A contractor yesterday asked for a judicial review of the Commonwealth Ports Authority’s decision to deny its appeal over the awarding of a construction project on Tinian.

ASC Arch Structure Corp., which does business as ASC Construction, said that CPA’s actions were “arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with the law.”

In papers filed through its lawyer, Steven Woodruff, ASC said that it submitted the lowest bid of \$2.567 million last year but the project, an improvement work for the West Tinian International Airport terminal, was awarded to AIC Marianas, which it said had a \$2.651 million bid.

ASC also accused CPA of breach of contract in its alleged failure to observe good faith and fair dealing, thus exposing ASC to damages from loss of profits.

The company asked the Superior Court for temporary, preliminary, and permanent injunctive relief.

It asked the court to set aside CPA’s decision and to order the agency to award the contract to ASC or alternatively, to pay ASC expectative damages and reimburse its costs of bid and protest, as well as attorneys’ fees.

In its complaint, ASC said that CPA issued its invitation for bid for construction of certain airport terminal improvement on Tinian in April 2003. It said that the IFB was amended twice—in June and July 2003. The bid was opened on Aug. 1, 2003.

On Oct. 31, 2003, ASC said that CPA wrote to say that its [ASC’s] bid was non-responsive because its bond company, Equitable Insurance Co., is not U.S. treasury-listed. CPA further said that the exemption for that requirement was not available upon the advise of the Attorney General’s Office.

But ASC said that CPA’s rejection of ASC’s preferred surety was based on “nothing more than a memo” from the assistant attorney general to the director of technical division of the Department of Public Works dated Oct. 23, 2003.

The plaintiff said the memo

was “an inadequate basis and likely ultra vires in several respects.”

ASC said it timely filed a protest with CPA on Nov. 11, 2003.

On Nov. 20, it said that the DPW Secretary wrote to CPA advising it that the proper course where there is a problem with the surety “is to give the construction company the opportunity to select a different bonding company.” ASC said that CPA ignored the secretary’s position.

On Jan. 26, 2004, CPA executive director Carlos Salas reportedly denied ASC’s protest, which was timely appealed by the company on Feb. 10. On April 6, the CPA appeal committee reportedly affirmed Salas’ decision.

ASC filed a timely appeal on April 21, requesting for a reconsideration of the committee’s decision. On April 26, the committee issued its final order, maintaining its previous position.

On May 13, the CPA reportedly certified that the construction services are “urgently needed” and asserted that the “award and execution of contract with the lowest responsible bidder, AIC Marianas, will be advantageous to CPA.”

Ayuyu to push for DPS accreditation

By **SHAN SEMAN**
REPORTER

Major Juan M. Ayuyu stressed yesterday that getting the Department of Public Safety accredited by the Commission Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies is his primary concern as newly appointed acting Police Director, which became effective last May 16.

Ayuyu said that, although he is faced with many tasks, his main goal is to push for the accreditation.

“There are over 400 standards that must be established in order for that [accreditation] to be possible, and I have been tasked to do that,” he said.

Ayuyu, who replaced Maj. Bertha C. Tudela, said the accreditation is a long-term goal that could be expected 18 months from now.

“There is a long process ahead of us, and [in order] to get considered for the accreditation, we must meet the minimum standard of CALEA. As I mentioned earlier, there are about 400 standards, and we have to meet the minimum required to be recognized by CALEA.”

The Police chief said he ex-

pects to hit the minimum standard by the end of this year.

“I intend to accomplish that at least by the end of the year. Hopefully, we will get recognized, and from there, we can work toward accreditation. I will work on policies and procedures necessary to meet this goal.”

Among the tasks Ayuyu said he would address are operational problems, including personnel, equipment, and training.

“I have a monumental task,” he said. “There are a lot of things I would like to see implemented. Getting the department accredited, and at the same time maintain professionalism within the ranks.”

Ayuyu also expressed his desire to include departments in Rota and Tinian in the accreditation process.

“Getting accredited by CALEA helps in networking, federal grant assistance and across-the-board transfer or relationship with other departments nationwide,” Ayuyu said.

Ayuyu earned an Associate degree in Police Science at the Honolulu Community College. He then earned his bachelor’s degree in Criminology at University of Hawaii Manoa in 1982. He was employed as a

detective upon arrival on Saipan and at one point, served as supervisor of the Patrol Section. He then transferred to the Rota DPS. He was hired as Assistant Chief for the Division of Corrections six years ago. He also taught in the Police Academy and said he “will continue providing service training.”

“With Corrections, I was developing policies under the American Corrections Association as well as local CNMI and federal laws,” he said. “I was also heavily involved in the planning and designing of the new prison facility. As a member of the prison task force, I worked with consultants and architects in designing and developing the overall program.”

Earlier, DPS commissioner Edward Camacho explained the transition phase that resulted in Ayuyu taking over the post.

“In no way was this transition done in criticism of the past leadership. It is a step for continuous improvement. I must add that the only thing constant in the department is change. There are a lot of changes and we’ll always have it...but it does not mean the past leadership was not good. The best can be made better.”

diabetes
+green

DOL proposed regs raise fees, allow casual work

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

The Department of Labor’s proposed regulations aim to raise the nonresident workers’ surety bond and other fees. It would also allow casual employment of workers and temporary transfers within the same business.

DOL legal counsel Kevin Lynch and Division of Labor director Dean Tenorio said the bond’s coverage would be equal to six months’ wages from the current two or three months’ wages.

Lynch said the current amount has been deemed insufficient in today’s standards, noting that the current regulations had not been changed since its adoption in 1988.

“The current amount is inadequate given the fact that medical costs, transport costs, etc. have substantially increased since 1988,” Lynch said.

He said the medical coverage would also increase to \$10,000 under the proposed rules.

Other changes would also include the elimination of exit requirement for immediate relatives prior to working in the CNMI as well as allowing for casual employment.

“This [casual employment] is a new concept,” said Tenorio.

Under the proposal, casual employment would allow for eight hours of work within 30 days. This still may change because the proposed regulations remain open to public comments.

Under the proposal, temporary transfers may also be allowed in certain businesses such as the hotel, garment, and construction.

Natural cause seen in motel death

An autopsy conducted Wednesday at the Commonwealth Health Center on the woman found dead at a motel showed that she died of natural causes relating to her medical history.

According to Department of Public Safety public information officer Sgt. Thomas A. Blas Jr., the findings of the examination conducted by Dr. Aurelio Espinola, chief medical examiner from Guam, showed no signs or evidence of injury that ties in with foul play and suicide.

The woman, 34-year-old Sun Hee Lee, was found dead at the San Jose Motel located behind San Jose Church on May 20.

The Department of Public Safety received a call at 1:04pm requesting authorities to check on an individual found unresponsive in one of the rooms of the establishment.

But DOL officials noted that temporary transfers would be subject to conditions to prevent abuses such as the tendency to share employee’s time among sister or affiliate companies.

Overall, Lynch said the proposed regulations hope to bring stricter provisions to protect law-abiding employers and employees and to prevent abuses in the system.

The proposal’s “doubly hot issue,” acknowledges Lynch, is allowing nonresident workers to have more than one job.

But he said, “the reason there is to give greater flexibility for both employers and employees” to hire or get hired, especially during certain seasons without having to bring in additional people to the CNMI from off-island.

Lynch noted that the proposed multiple job provision basically holds the primary employer responsible for housing and medical cost—except for the medical costs incurred as a result of second employment—of a nonresident worker.

The proposed regulations would also limit the work time of the employee in the second employment.

Responding to the concern on the possible rise in medical cost as a result of “overworked” and “stressed out” workers, DOL officials said they hope that employees would use their sound judgment that “they won’t work the employees to death.”

Tenorio admits that the proposed regulations would result in more paperwork for employers and employees to get things done.

The department was heavily criticized when it initially raised the issue of second jobs for nonresident workers last year. The local community generally opposed it believing that it would take jobs

away from local residents.

Authorities noted that multiple work or part-time jobs for alien workers is not prohibited under the existing Nonresident Workers Act.

They said that the policy

shift should have been done a long time ago.

The issue surfaced only recently following a court decision that essentially acknowledged that a nonresident worker is not prohibited from

getting more than one job in the CNMI.

Lynch and Tenorio spoke during yesterday’s Society of Human Resources and Management forum at the Hyatt Regency Hotel’s Giovanni Restaurant.

conwood

mcdo
cmyk

cb cruz



In 2003 the Marianas Memorial Sub-Committee, under the American Memorial Park Visitor Center Exhibit Design Committee, undertook the task of researching, compiling and verifying names to be included on the Memorial. A compre-

The names of recorded death casualties are engraved on 10 granite panels at the Memorial. When the American Memorial Park Visitors Center and its World War II exhibit are completed in February 2005, the new Memorial and the existing Court of Honor for U.S. service members will be directly visible from the Reflection of Loss exhibit hall.

FLIGHT SCHEDULES AS OF MAY 10, 2014				
DEPARTURES			ARRIVALS	
Departs-Miami				
AA101	7:00am	4:30m	AA	
AA103	8:00am	4:15m	AA	10:45P
AA105	9:00am	3:00am	AA	
AA107	10:00am	2:15am	AA	
AA109	11:00am	4:00am	AA	
AA111	12:00pm	4:30pm	AA	
AA113	1:00pm	4:00pm	AA	
AA115	2:00pm	4:00pm	AA	
AA117	3:00pm	4:00pm	AA	
AA119	4:00pm	4:00pm	AA	
AA121	5:00pm	4:00pm	AA	
AA123	6:00pm	4:00pm	AA	
AA125	7:00pm	4:00pm	AA	
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AA129	9:00pm	4:00pm	AA	
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AA133	11:00pm	4:00pm	AA	
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AA101	11:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	12:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	1:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	2:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	3:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	4:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	5:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	6:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	7:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	8:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	9:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	10:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	11:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	12:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	1:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	2:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	3:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				
AA101	4:00am	4:00pm	AA	
Miami-Miami				

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE				
Airline	DT	FT	Frequency	
Nonstop/Hub				
FA1 100	2:00am	8:00am	Daily	
Hub-to-Hub				
FA1 100	6:00am	8:00am	Daily	
Hub-to-Hub				
FA1 100	8:00am	10:00am	Daily	
Hub-to-Hub				
FA1 100	8:00am	11:00am	Daily	
Nonstop/Hub				
FA1 100	4:00pm	4:00pm	Daily	
Hub-to-Hub				
FA1 100	4:00pm	5:00pm	Daily	
Hub-to-Hub				
FA1 100	6:00pm	8:00pm	Daily	
Hub-to-Hub				
FA1 100	6:00pm	7:00pm	Daily	
Hub-to-Hub				
FA1 101	6:00am	8:00am	Daily	
FA1 102	1:00pm	4:00pm	Daily	
FA1 103	2:00pm	5:00pm	Daily	
FA1 104	3:00pm	6:00pm	Daily	
FA1 105	4:00pm	7:00pm	Daily	
FA1 106	5:00pm	8:00pm	Daily	
FA1 107	6:00pm	9:00pm	Daily	
FA1 108	7:00pm	10:00pm	Daily	

A trough of low pressure stretching from 1n143e to 7n145e is producing scattered showers and a few thunderstorms south of Palau between the equator and 4n from 132e to 144e. Trade winds convergence east of the trough is producing numerous showers and scattered thunderstorms around Chuuk between 3n and 10n from 151e to 156e. Trade wind convergence is also producing scattered showers and thunderstorms south of Majuro between the Equator and 6n from 168e to 176e. An upper level low centered near 21n137e is producing widely scattered showers northwest of the Mariana Islands between 16n and 24n from 136e to 142e. An upper level trough located far northwest of Wake Island is producing scattered showers and a few thunderstorms north of Wake Island between 20n and 25n from 161e to 165e.



Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10-15 kt. Highs near 88. Lows near 76.



Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10-15 kt. Highs near 88. Lows near 76.



Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northwest at 10 kt.



Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.



Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Variable at less than 10 kt.






















Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10 kt.

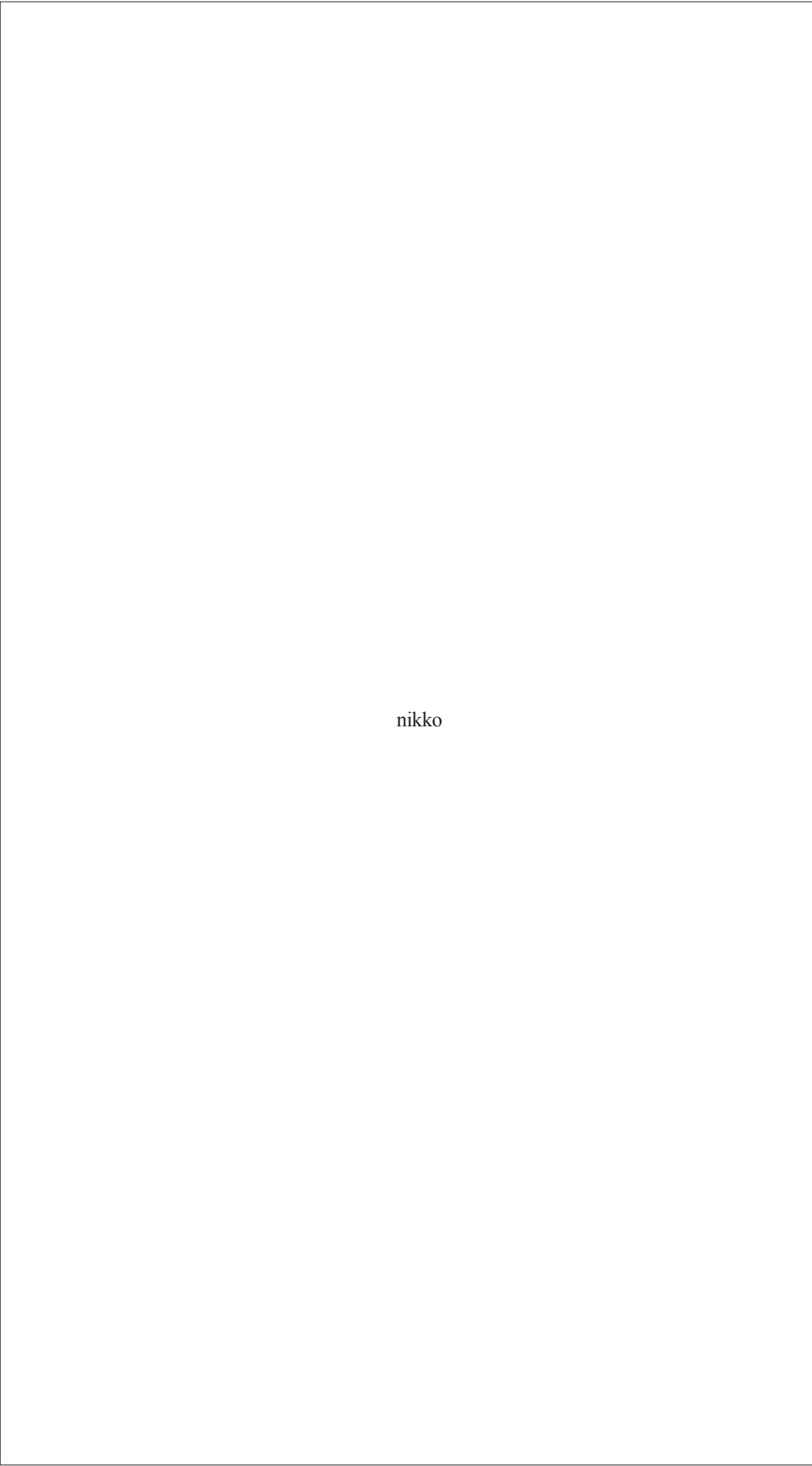
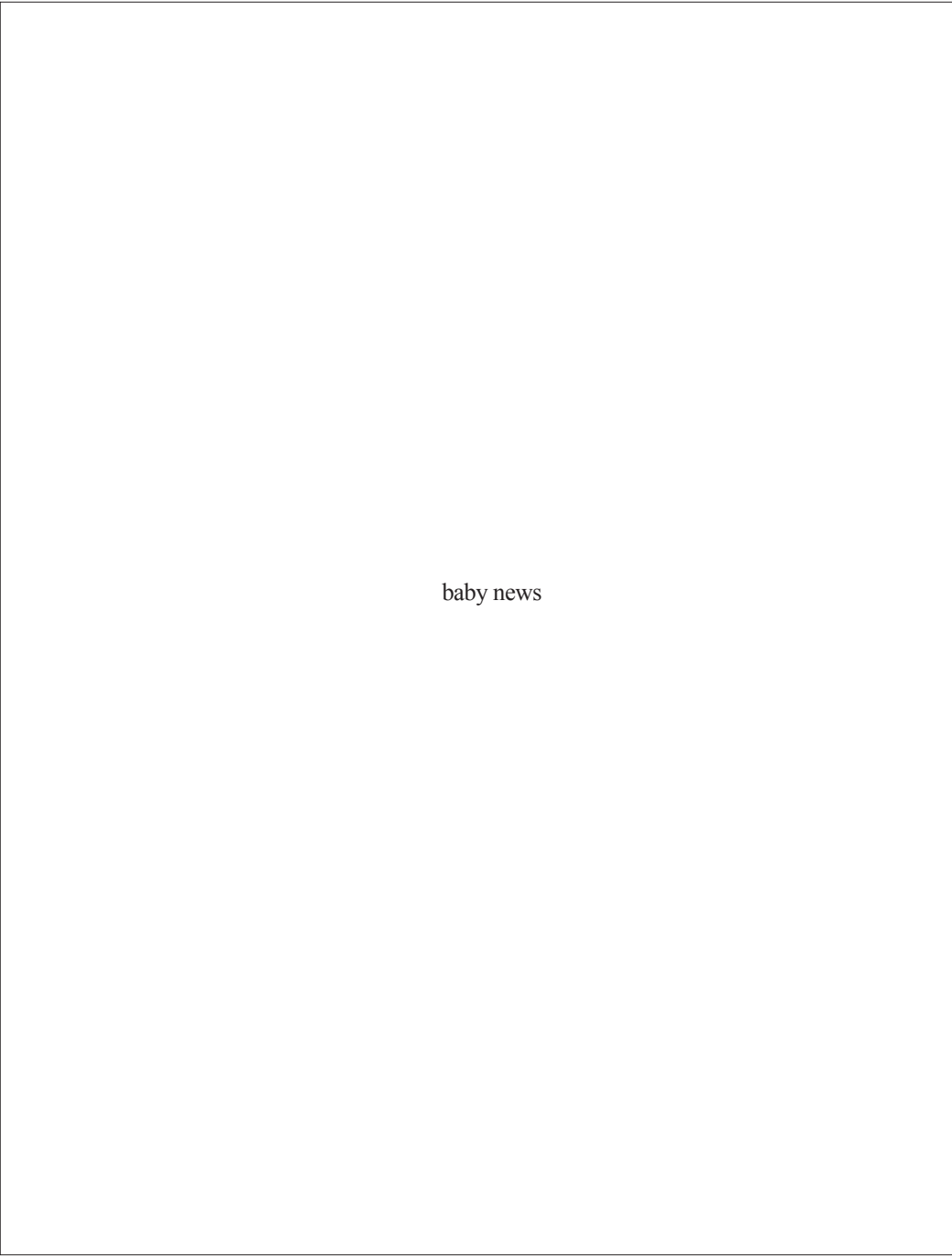


Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: East at 10-15 kt.



Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: East at 10-15 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
 Auckland	Partly Cloudy	63F (17C)	52F (11C)
 Beijing	Sunny	88F (31C)	63F (17C)
 Hong Kong	Thunder	90F (32C)	79F (26C)
 Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	87F (31C)	75F (24C)
 London, England	Partly Cloudy	67F (19C)	52F (11C)
 Los Angeles	Sunny	80F (27C)	62F (17C)
 Manila	Thunder	94F (34C)	82F (28C)
 Melbourne	Rain	52F (11C)	45F (7C)
 Miami	Showers	89F (32C)	76F (24C)
 New York City	Showers	74F (23C)	56F (13C)
 Osaka	Partly Cloudy	70F (21C)	55F (13C)
 Paris	Partly Cloudy	66F (19C)	50F (10C)
 Pusan	Partly Cloudy	74F (23C)	61F (16C)
 Rome	Showers	77F (25C)	55F (13C)
 Salem, Oregon	Sunny	80F (27C)	50F (10C)
 San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	69F (21C)	54F (12C)
 Seoul	Sunny	85F (29C)	62F (17C)
 Tokyo, Japan	Partly Cloudy	73F (23C)	60F (16C)
 Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	80F (27C)	60F (16C)



Opinion

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The fog persists in Iraq

As the military and security situation in Iraq has deteriorated, the United States and the United Nations have pinned ever-higher expectations on the appointment of a new interim government. That process, completed Tuesday, did not go quite as either the U.S. or the U.N. expected. The future of Iraq is not much clearer, and the popular legitimacy of the new government is an unknown.

The politicians of the old U.S.-picked Iraqi Governing Council simply outflanked the U.N. special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, in forcing their own choices for a Shiite prime minister, Iyad Allawi, and a Sunni, Ghazi Ajil Yawer, for the more ceremonial post of president. One of the two deputy prime ministers will be a Kurd.

Political analysts believe the U.S. was weakened by military standoffs in Fallouja and Najaf and by the still-developing prison abuse scandal. It could not arrest militant cleric and militia leader Muqtada Sadr, much less provide the muscle to get Brahimi's top choices installed.

At least former exile leader Ahmad Chalabi, whose false claims of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction played a major part in leading the U.S. to invade, has been shoved aside. Allawi, though he has received CIA funding and support, is now a critic of the U.S. and an avowed foe of Chalabi, whose own years of U.S. funding belatedly ended last month.

President Bush said two weeks ago that it was "time to take the training wheels off" and let an interim government replace the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority on July 1. That's more an insult than a declaration of confidence in the new government's ability to protect itself, the frightened cadre of foreign workers in Iraq or the ordinary Iraqis who are desperate to lead normal lives. A longtime exile, Allawi has little base of support inside Iraq. With the wholesale resignation of the Governing Council, his biggest local backers have left the scene.

Perhaps it is not a portent that Tuesday was punctuated by a mortar attack and two deadly car bombings in and near Baghdad. But the attacks were business as usual in a city increasingly too dangerous for walking around or conducting legitimate business.

More than 800 U.S. military personnel have been killed in Iraq since the war began, most of them since Bush declared "major combat" effectively over more than a year ago. More than 130,000 troops will stay on after July 1. But to whom will they answer? Allawi said he wanted control over U.S. forces except when they had to defend themselves. What constitutes self-defense will not be a question settled easily, if at all.

Allawi's Cabinet is neatly divided among Iraq's diverse and competing groups. Whether its members can even be protected from assassination precedes the question of whether they can govern effectively. That, in a nutshell, is the continuing U.S. problem in Iraq.

Los Angeles Times



The politics of being BOE Teacher Rep

The BOE Teacher Rep. is a political post by its very nature of appointment, with a mandate implied in the Constitution to speak and act in the best interest of the school appointed to help. It's political and politics will always surface. As with any political election there were two candidates. I just happened to be the candidate that started it all and won. Now I'm being subjected to continuous public attacks by critics and sour losers—just like any other politician. But as with any political process, there is a silent majority of over 300 teachers who have given their consent in writing to me and their school rep. for representation and that's the only thing that really matters. The teacher's meeting was very successful because the Teacher Reps and teachers now know and understand that collective bargaining is the teachers' baby and that I am their political appointee on the Board to assist teachers. We all owe Mr. Torres a big thank you for clarifying the issues.

Many teachers understand the politics of the BOE Teacher Rep. and they realize that opposition to empowering teachers had the potential to make things "ugly", especially when there was clear opposition by one BOE member. But what I found interesting was it took only two BOE meetings and I was able to get a Committee created to address the teachers' concerns. But it took me almost five years to get teachers to organize and to realize they do have the power and right to control their destiny as PSS employees—through collective bargaining. It was the politics of the Teacher Rep. post that caused teachers to become polarized.

The problem after the election is that there is still a handful of people that I can count on one hand that still want to play politics when they should be trying to be a part of the solution in empowering teachers. To demonstrate the power of politics, there are only five people who publicly politicized the Teacher Rep. issue and they were successful. There are over 580 teachers in the school system and they should not let the political antics of these five people prevent them from attending meetings and exercising their rights to a bargaining agreement.

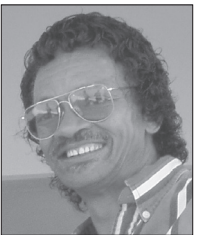
Collective bargaining is a vehicle for all teachers to have their concerns addressed and resolved in a fair and equitable fashion. It is my job to assist teachers with acquiring a vehicle or mechanism to address their rights and concerns and I have done just that because collective bargaining is the law and not something I dreamed up. It took a lot off my shoulders and I was so glad to see teachers in the meeting finally realizing the burden is totally on teachers to pursue issues through bargaining when I can't address or resolve the issue at the Board level. I am only too glad to see the School Reps being strong enough to stand on their own now.

There was a legitimate concern over my use of the term "I." Yes, I have said a lot of "I's" and if anyone works on something primarily alone for five years because no one else would take an interest, they would say I too. But I am very glad that I can now say "we teachers" and I can also appreciate the suggestion. I'm sorry if I offended some teachers but I really don't feel bad about the "I" issue because if I hadn't done something to empower teachers they wouldn't be standing at the door for bargaining like they are now. I'm sure, in time, when teachers start reaping the benefits of my efforts, the "I" issue is something that teachers will be thankful for.

I do want to say a special thanks to Ms. Juanita S. Malone for admit-

By AMBROSE M. BENNETT

The writer is the Board of Education Teacher Representative.



ting that I was on the right track with collective bargaining after realizing that the beating wasn't politically correct. So now she is promoting collective bargaining and how the entire CNMI needs to be supportive. Your comments on this matter is obviously a direct result of political tactics of one BOE member that has been very successful in creating the impression that I am fighting with the entire Board. In fact, I have never fought with the Board and they will tell you so if you ever take time to ask. I have had disagreements with one BOE member who just doesn't seem to like me and I can't change that—so let's just leave it at being part of the politics that comes with the post.

I truly hope the future BOE Teacher Reps will be as strong as I have been. Some people, and even some teachers, are going to treat the BOE Teacher Rep like a political football for their own political or personal agendas. It doesn't matter that you have put your heart into helping teachers. It doesn't matter that you are trying your very best to do it the right way. The BOE Teacher Rep has become a political target, especially if he or she is going to be outspoken about doing his or her job. But the good part about becoming a political target is the fact that you have been empowered to become a force with the potential to create real changes.

Even the negative and positive spins that were displayed in the media are another example of how political this matter has become and why the silent majority are afraid to even show their faces at meetings or speak out. One paper writes on the front page, "Disagreements mar teachers' move for collective bargaining." Only two teachers conducted themselves out of character and no one ever disagreed about collective bargaining. In fact, the meeting was very informative and productive because it produced a better understanding of the dynamics and factors involved and created a consensus plan among the school level reps. The other paper wrote on the second page, "Go on with bargaining process but be less adversarial," which was much closer to the actual events that took place. The two different twist put on the story by the news is a clear example of how issues become polarized to the point of being politicized—even though it was not intentional. Mr. Torres was right on the money about everything he said, especially this adversarial attitude we teachers have had among ourselves that has been our own biggest enemy, causing us to fall for the politics that came with the election for BOE Teacher Rep. I truly hope and believe that the silent majority of teachers appreciate what I have been trying to do for them and that we all have learned from these events—even my critics. Once the election is over, it's really time to drop the politics and for all teachers to be headed in one direction and create solutions to the many problems plaguing the entire public school system.

Letters to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

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CNM's First Daily Newspaper

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\$100K Wayside Exhibit project completed

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

History buffs now have a new way of learning more about the World War II battle on Saipan after the completion of the Wayside Exhibit project, which features the construction of panels that depict the bloody battle.

The construction and placing of 12 panels were completed in time for the upcoming 60th Commemoration of the battle.

The task, dubbed as the Wayside Exhibit Project, was funded by the U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, costing about \$100,000.

According to Mark W. Johnson NPS, the project was geared toward providing interpretive signs in key locations throughout the island that depict various events that occurred during the war.

“They are to help people, especially those not from here, to understand the story about a particular view and what went on in the past at the place they’re looking at,” he said during an interview Tuesday morning at Mount Tapotchao.

Five of the exhibit panels were installed at Mount Tapotchao. Two panels were also placed at the Isley Airfield and along Beach Road. Other

areas include Agingan Point, the Banzai area, and the parking lot of the Mt. Carmel Cathedral.

Johnson said the project initially included the placing of panels on Tinian, but due to budget and time constraint, was limited to sites on Saipan only.

“[Because] of the upcoming 60th Commemoration, we had to push the gas pedal on the project. If we were to do this project on a battlefield in the mainland, the time span would pretty much be between 14 and 30 months. I’m just glad we completed these panels with time to spare.”

PUTC

From Page 1

Garapan district was without power for about two hours “at the height of the dinner rush,” while Kagman and Capitol Hill had no power from 8pm until almost midnight.

This happened as the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Battles of Saipan and Tinian is set to begin on June 11, he noted.

“Extreme concern has been expressed as to the dissonance between your assurances and the reality of the recent power outages,” he said.

He noted that continued power outages would have a devastating and disastrous effect on the tourism industry “at a time when we can least afford it.”

Villagomez said he intends to convene an emergency oversight hearing to verify the status of the power capacity, how CUC got to the current critical situation, what is being done to prevent additional power outages, and how to ensure a long-term adequate supply of power on the island.

Toward this end, the committee is asking the CUC to immediately provide an analysis of the current status of all engines in its four power plants, including the current output of each engine, repair status—including dates of parts ordered and estimated time of arrival—and where an engine is currently being overhauled, and its anticipated date to be placed online.

“Please further provide an analysis of your solution to the current problem, and how you intend to ensure that CUC will be able to provide necessary power

demands of the upcoming celebrations,” said the panel chairman.

He said the committee understands that CUC may deem certain items as privileged at this time, but “it does not share the same sentiments with respect to the information currently being requested.

The lawmaker noted that the committee can use its subpoena powers to get needed information to address an emergency case such as the power situation.

“It is aware of its subpoena powers but trust that CUC will take this opportunity to ensure that the communication between CUC and the committee will continue to be cordial and productive,” he said.

“However, should CUC fail to so comply...this committee is obligated in the representation of the people and citizens of the Commonwealth to take any and all actions it may deem necessary in the protection of its interests,” he said.

During the public hearing last week, CUC declined to give certain information to the committee, citing its “confidentiality” in view of an on-going privatization work.

The lawmaker said that “due to the urgency of the matter,” the committee believes that CUC has been at work on the items requested, and that there should be no problem in providing the documents “to my office by Friday, June 4, 2004.”

As of yesterday, Villagomez office said that it has not received any documents from the utility firm.

Meantime, Sablan said yesterday that CUC can readily provide the panel

with the needed information.

“The management should have all that information. We will submit to the committee,” he said.

Sablan, however, said he was uneasy about the committee’s “manner” of requesting for the information. “They should be careful how to address things,” said Sablan.

“We can’t really guarantee 100 percent perfection. We can’t predict tomorrow. We’ve been saying that the problem here is that we have old engines. Now we’re trying our best to maintain and make them operational,” he said.

He said engine 3 and 4 in the main power plant in Lower Base are currently being overhauled. Until they are fixed, he said, power outages would continue.

Sablan said he does not know as to when the engines’ repair can be finished “When they’re fixed, the supply is back to normal.”

CUC has four power plants: PP 1 and 2 in Lower Base, PP3 in Isley Field, and PP4 in Puerto Rico.

PP1 and 2 are being proposed for privatization, PP3 is currently inoperational, and PP4, which is run by a private firm, is being petitioned by local residents for immediate relocation due to noise pollution, among others.

PP1 and 2 reportedly supply 53 MW and 3.4 MG respectively, while PP4 supplies 12.40 MW.

Under normal conditions, PP1 and 2 should reportedly be supplying 81.2 and 15 MW respectively, and PP4, 19.5 MW.

Saipan’s daily power consumption is said to be at 120.2 MW.

BOS

From Page 1

ern Mariana Islands Retirement Fund, while the remaining amount are deposits by the Commonwealth Development Authority.

“Reaching an agreement that is acceptable to both parties was a major condition of the bank’s rehabilitation plan and with this now signed, BoS is one more step closer to achieving total rehabilitation,” O’Connor said.

The bank reopened on May 27, 2003 under a court-approved rehabilitation plan that provided for withdrawal restrictions on pre-receivership accounts.

In late March this year, the bank disclosed that it lifted withdrawal restrictions on old checking accounts, reporting that BoS profited some \$500,000 in the previous three months.

During this time, BoS president John Bargfrede reported that total bank deposits had already reached \$30 million—about 10 percent of which are new accounts. Bargfrede said cash and liquid investments amount to \$13.5 million.

The bank continued implementing withdrawal restrictions on savings and CD accounts, which would last up to 20 months since the bank’s May 2003 reopening pursuant to the rehabilitation plan. Such withdrawals are limited monthly to 5 percent of the account balance.

O’Connor said the bank continues to become more profitable, adding that its condition would further improve if the Superior Court would allow the bank to begin loan services.

The bank asked the court to instruct the CNMI banking commissioner to green-light BoS’ loan

services. The banking commissioner had reportedly rejected the bank’s request to revive loan services, on condition that BoS strike a deal first with the Retirement Fund concerning the agency’s deposits.

No such deal, however, has been reached between the bank and the Retirement Fund, which reportedly wants to get the entire amount of its deposits from BoS. O’Connor accused Fund officials of being “unreasonable and uncompromising” in the negotiations.

“[The] Retirement Fund could have had limited access to the money many months ago if they negotiated in good faith with BoS like MPLA did,” O’Connor said.

He added that the bank had offered the Fund a withdrawal scheme similar to the terms of the agreement reached with the MPLA, but the agency rejected it.

Entertainment ready for Liberation Fest

The entertainment segment for today’s 2003 Liberation Festival opening ceremony is all set as organizers have booked various musicians and dance groups that will perform this weekend at the Garapan Fishing Base.

The opening ceremony, headed by Saipan Mayor Juan B. Tudela and eight candidates vying for the Liberation Day queen title, kicks of the events at 6pm.

Following various remarks, introduction of candidates, and recognition of reigning queens and princesses, a set of entertainers have expressed commitment to take the stage.

Kicking off the entertainment are the Te Kanahau Nui Dancers, who will perform at 8-8:30pm. They will be followed by another cultural dance performance by the Carolinian Warriors, who

would take center stage at 8:30-9pm.

The evening will then be highlighted by a fireworks show, expected to last some 30 minutes after the dance performance.

Following the fireworks are musical performances from The Kontra Band, Candy Taman, and Marvin Guerrero.

Tomorrow’s entertainment crew includes the W&V Band, Son Ray Band, Ali’i dancers, Fred Saures, and the Archilyn Band.

Sunday’s entertainment features the Topikool Blenz, Kagman Chamolinian Dancers, Isa Dancers, UB Kai Band, Parker, Ace Elameto, and Nolas Kaliga.

The Liberation Festival, headed by the Saipan Mayor’s Office, will run through to July 5. The grounds site also includes various vendors. *(Shan Seman)*

\$10K

From Page 1

tion in Capitol Hill.

Most of the plants reportedly had stems of about three inches in diameter.

Blas said information about the location and the plants came courtesy of a tip received through the Crime Stoppers hotline earlier in the day.

He said the tip was immediately forwarded to the local drug task force Special Investigation Section.

“SIS team members, along with members of the TASC team, conducted a joint reconnaissance and independent investigation of the location given in the tip, and discovered the marijuana plantation before nightfall [Wednesday],” he said.

Blas said all the plants were confiscated as part of evidence, and were

JUDGE

From Page 1

May 25, 2004 ruling that ordered prosecutors to amend the charging documents to officially disclose the AG’s name.

In that ruling, Lizama also junked the request of Torres and two other co-defendants to quash the charging documents that did not bear Brown’s name.

Torres has been at odds with Brown and had opposed her nomination as attorney general. Brown had just been confirmed to the post when the charges against the congressman were filed in court. The AGO claimed that the investigation against the congressman began even before Brown was confirmed.

Lizama granted the AGO’s request for clarification on the May 25 ruling, but stressed that it was clear.

“The court is frankly baffled as to why the government is so reluctant to provide this information [attorney general’s name] on the record. The identity of the person occupying the attorney general’s office at the time of filing is well known and disclosing it officially in no way harms the government’s case,” Lizama said.

“The court’s may 25th order was clear and simple: the defendants have a right to be told, on the record, the name of the attorney general under whose authority they are being prosecuted,” the judge said. “The government now has a clear and simple choice: it can comply with the court’s order, or it can dismiss the charges.”

Deputy Attorney General Clyde Lemons Jr. and CNMI chief prosecutor David Hutton signed the charging documents—not Brown.

Lemons and Hutton had sought clarification of Lizama’s May 25 ruling, saying a defendant should be entitled to know the identity of the attorney general if this is relevant to the defense. They said that Torres and his co-defen-

being processed yesterday.

No arrests have been made yet as the case is still under investigation.

The NMI Crime Stoppers, which was established in 1989, has been helping the police department solve cases through unique information-gathering techniques that reward tipsters. The past year has been a banner year for the NMI Crime Stoppers.

The Crime Stoppers received calls in its 234-7272 hotline, which led to arrests for crimes ranging from burglary to robbery, and murder.

The program also received numerous calls about the cultivation and distribution of marijuana and ice. Aside from Wednesday’s raid, tips received through the hotline have led to the removal of over \$20,000 worth of illegal substances from the streets of the CNMI.

dants have not shown the relevance of the inclusion of the attorney general’s identity in the charging documents. The prosecutors also asked as to what stage of the criminal proceedings the issue should be brought to court.

Lizama said there is no need for an evidentiary proceeding to resolve the relevance issue.

“In the May 25th ruling, the court concluded that a criminal defendant has the right to know under whose authority a prosecution is occurring, but only if he or she asks. The only showing that needs to be made is a desire for the information and that burden has clearly been met,” the judge said.

“As the court has ordered the government to disclose this [attorney general’s name] on the record as this point in the proceeding, it seems obvious that ‘prior to arraignment and entry of plea’ is an appropriate time,” he added.

Lemons and Hutton charged Torres with five counts each of misconduct in public office, conspiracy to commit theft, conspiracy to commit theft by deception and illegal use of public supplies, services, time and personnel.

They filed against Dorothy Sablan five counts each of the last three offenses. Additionally, the prosecutors filed five counts each of theft, theft by deception and receiving stolen property against her.

Frank S. Ada faces four counts each of conspiracy to commit theft and conspiracy to commit theft by deception, and illegal use of public supplies, services, time and personnel.

The criminal information alleged that Sablan received at least five checks totaling \$5,384.67 in government payroll in 2003, when she was actually off-island. Sablan used to be Stanley Torres’ office manager. Ada allegedly prepared fraudulent time and attendance sheets indicating that Sablan rendered work when she was off-island.

A grateful NMI remembers

In his World War II memoir Goodbye Darkness, William Manchester noted that most soldiers who fought in the Pacific Theatre didn't know at any one time where they were among the thousands of islands dotting that vast ocean. Many Americans today are equally unfamiliar with the Pacific island chain that has become the newest member of the American political family, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Fewer still know that Marines, soldiers, sailors, and airmen fought a critical World War II battle in these very islands. Some of those men may have hailed from your hometown.

Sixty years ago, flames of artillery fire and clouds of smoke obscured our clear island skies. The whisper of the tropical wind was lost in the thunder of explosions and cries of war. Our blue lagoon ran red with the blood of dying American soldiers. On invasion day, June 15, 1944, the indigenous people of the Northern Marianas were terrified. A mandated territory of Japan at the time, we'd heard stories of these foreign "devils," as the Americans were called.

Only later did we learn that the invading U.S. troops were not foe, but friend. Indeed, they were our liberators from centuries of colonization by Spain, Germany, and Japan and for the first time, we were accorded the framework through which we could decide our own political destiny. In a free election in 1976, citizens of the Northern Mariana Islands voted overwhelmingly to become a commonwealth in political union with the United States of America.

In June of this year, we will dedicate a full week of activities to commemorate the 60th Anniversary Commemoration of the WWII Battles of Saipan and Tinian. We will be honoring returning veterans and their families for their service and sacrifices. We also will be welcoming back Enola Gay pilot Gen. Paul Tibbets (ret.) and his surviving crew, who embarked from Tinian to Hiroshima with the first atomic bomb, Little Boy, (August 6, 1945) and at the American Memorial Park (jointly established by the National Park Service and the Northern Marianas government), we will be dedicating a memorial to the indigenous people of the Northern Marianas who died of war-related causes.

We have come a long way since that fateful day of invasion. While we continue to

preserve and promote our indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian cultures, we also embrace the 21st century wholeheartedly. Our modern-day tourism industry beckons to tourists who answer

the call from Japan, other Asian countries, and beyond.

We invite you during this June's celebration or at any other time of the year to experience the living history of the

Northern Marianas, where our tropical sun is outshone only by the warmth of gratitude in our hearts for those brave service members who helped pave our way to freedom 60 years ago. Our

grateful islands remember.

Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente
Chairman, Committee for Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of WWII

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+red





A DIFFERENT KIND OF MAKE UP

Volunteers had fake blood and dirt painted onto their faces and bodies in preparation for Wednesday's Operation Safe Harbor, an anti-terror drill involving a mock chemical Weapon of Mass Destruction and an explosive attack.



WOULD-BE VICTIMS

Volunteers in Wednesday's Operation Safe Harbor sit around while waiting for the exercise to start. The exercise involved a mock chemical Weapon of Mass Destruction and an explosive attack.

LET'S GO CAMPING

A decontamination team sets up the area where "victims" of the mock terror attack will be brought. The exercise, dubbed Operation Safe Harbor, involved a mock chemical Weapon of Mass Destruction and an explosive attack.



FAKE EMERGENCY

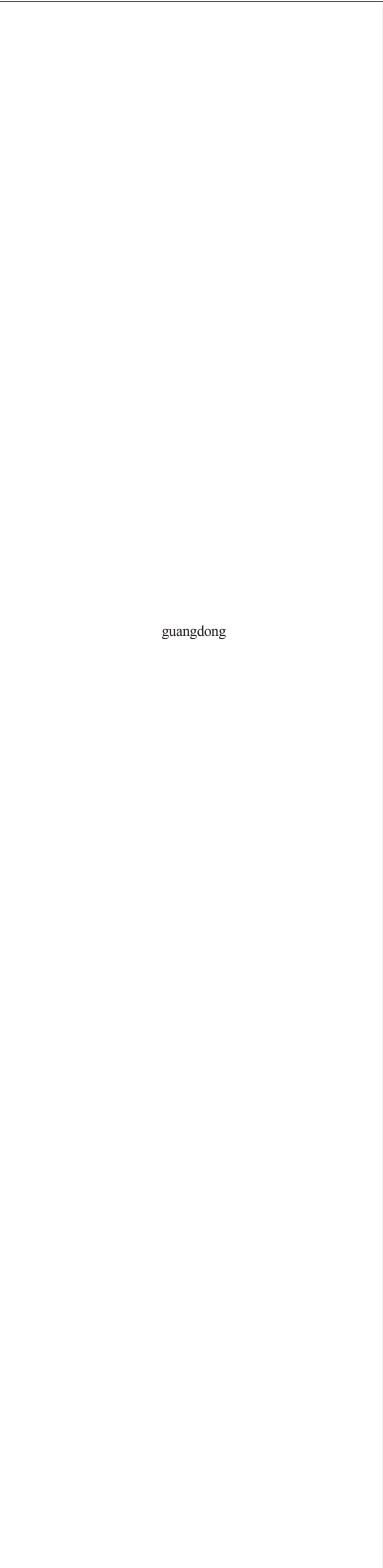
A team from the Department of Public Health attends to one of the "victims" in last Wednesday's Operation Safe Harbor, an exercise involving a mock chemical Weapon of Mass Destruction and an explosive attack.



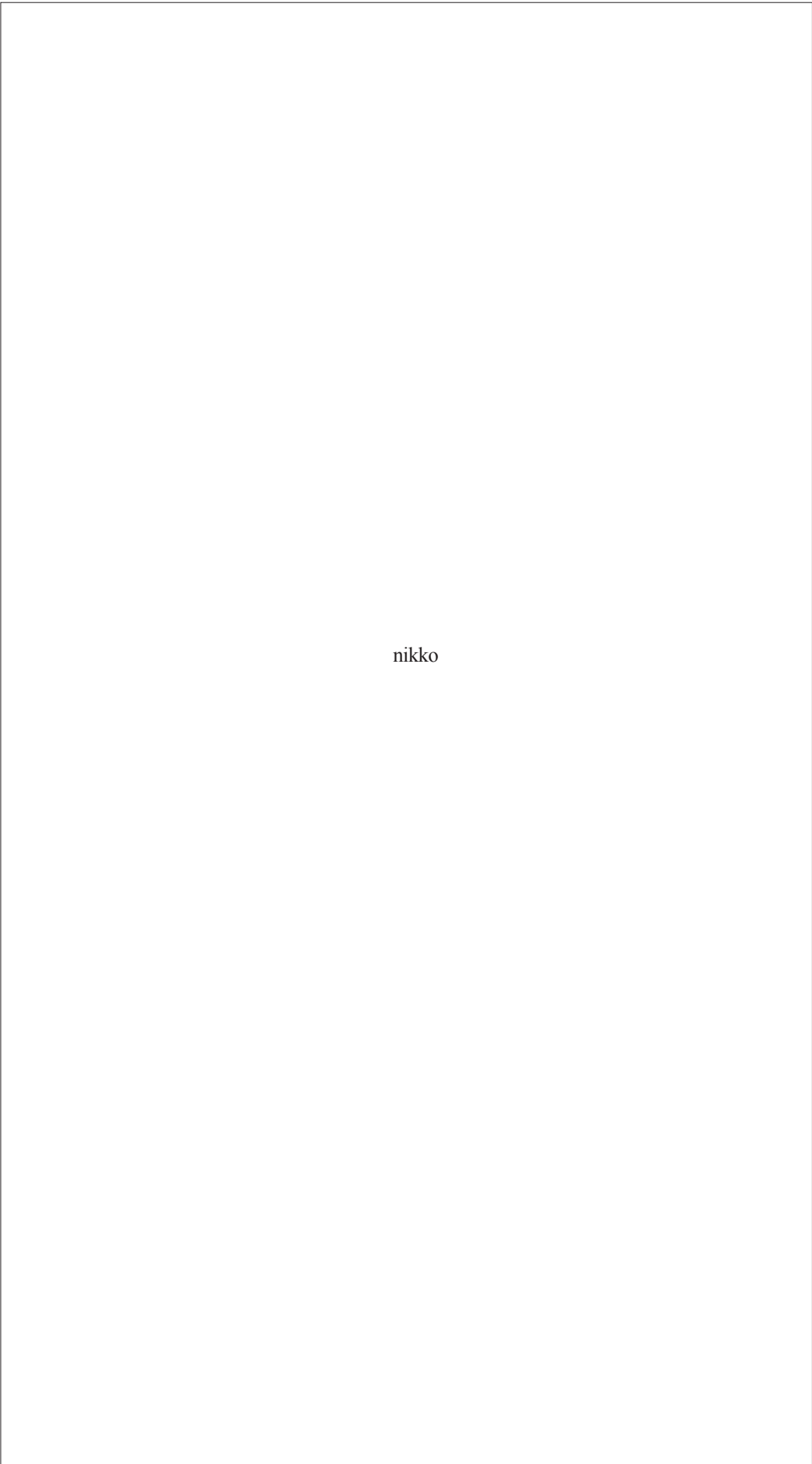
PANIC ROOM

A team at the Commonwealth Health Center attends to the "victims" in Wednesday's Operation Safe Harbor, an exercise involving a mock chemical Weapon of Mass Destruction and an explosive attack.

PTC-MARIANAS CUP



guangdong



nikko

Loca Milestones

62 KES students bid farewell

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

A total of 62 students from Koblerville Elementary School earned promotions to the junior high school educational level yesterday, receiving certificates of completion during the school's end of the year farewell ceremony.

The ceremony kicked off with the presentation of colors and singing of the U.S. and



Ester Paul
Commissioner's Award

CNMI national anthems by the STUCO and the Boy Scouts.

After welcoming remarks in three languages—English, Carolinian, and Chamorro—courtesy of students Genevieve Ngiraibuuch, Shannah Kaipat, and Ernest Cruz, Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente spoke to the graduat-

ing class as keynote speaker. Benavente commended the students for completing grade school, and followed this up by challenging each one to continue to pursue success in life through education.

Following Benavente's remarks, several individual were recognized for their academic efforts, with school officials presenting various awards, including the Presidential Awards for Educational Achievement, Presidential Awards for Educational Excellence, subject awards, and Top Five awards.

It was only fitting that Ester Paul, the student posting the highest Grade Point Average from fourth to sixth grade, was honored and recognized; she was named the recipient of the Commissioner's Award.

Paul made a brief appearance at the podium, extending her appreciation to her parents, teachers, KES staff and administrators, and fellow classmates.

Acting principal Happy Miller then closed the ceremony by congratulating the students for their achievements and noting her desire that they display the skills they had learned at the school once they enter junior high level.

Prior to closing their school year, the students had final walk around the campus. They, along with parents, guest, and staff, had lunch in the school cafeteria.



SHAN SEMAN
Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente presents Keoki Tudela with his certificate of completion during the farewell ceremony yesterday.



SHAN SEMAN
The Koblerville Elementary School sixth grade students listen attentively to the remarks during their farewell ceremony yesterday at the school grounds.



SHAN SEMAN
Tony Rogolifoi Jr., second from right, poses for a souvenir shot with from left, father Tony Rogolifoi, Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente, and brother Peter.



SHAN SEMAN
The sixth grade students take their final walk around the school campus at the conclusion of yesterday's ceremony.

DAIICHI

Recognized for their academic achievement were the five graduates with the highest GPA of their class: Mary Cris Waing, Jessilyn Dris, Ashley Castro, Cassandra Marquez, and Laura Ramos.

CASSIE FEJERAN



Cheska Salen
Principal's Award



Bernadette Laviste
Commissioner's Award

Garapan graduates 112 students

By CASSIE DLG FEJERAN
REPORTER

Garapan Elementary School held its graduation ceremony last night with teachers Marsha Owens and Beatrice Tualatai opening the floor to welcome family, relatives, and guests.

Pastor Alexis Lorzano led the invocation just before the opening remarks from the school's Principal, Yvonne R. Gomez. Following her remarks was the commissioner of education, Dr. Rita H. Inos.

Ashley Castro, STUCO president, marched up on stage to introduce the keynote speaker of the night, Brenda Schultz. Schultz was recognized as the

CNMI teacher of the year. She left the 112 graduating students with memories and advice for the challenges they will soon be facing.

Larra Ramos and Rotessa Sumpay led the graduates in their ceremonial song I Believe by Yoland Adams. Adding on to the students' performance was a special number that was composed and performed by two graduates, Tharanton Masayos and Troy Santos, who took the audience by surprise with a rap song I'm Gonna Miss This School, accompanied by the ukulele.

The most outstanding Mallard Award was presented to students who had been the most outstanding in their class.

Tricia Laborce, Peter Sablan, Antonette Cabrera, and Jesselyn Dris were a few of the graduates who received this award. The subject award, Presidential Academics award, recognition awards, and the Presidential Improvement awards were also presented to the students.

Recognized for their academic achievement were the five graduates with the highest GPA of their class: Mary Cris Waing, Jessilyn Dris, Ashley Castro, Cassandra Marquez, and Laura Ramos. The girls stood on stage to help welcome the top two graduates receiving the highest awards. The Principal's award was presented to Cheska Salen, while Bernadette Laviste was granted the

Commissioner's award and the Science subject award.

Closing the ceremony with his gratitude and appreciation to the 6th grade teachers and graduates was vice principal Rachael Teregeyo.



Brenda Schultz, the CNMI teacher of the year for 2003, speaks to the 112 graduating students.

CASSIE FEJERAN

Garapan Elementary School students listen to the speakers during their graduation ceremony.

CASSIE FEJERAN

39 SAES students ready for first grade

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

Some 39 kindergarten students will soon be part of the San Antonio Elementary School first grade lineup next school year after a promotion ceremony at the school grounds yesterday morning.

With parents, family members, and teachers witnessing the event, the students put on a show to remember them by, successfully performing several numbers including the Ocho Ocho and Pamela dances, which drew heavy applause from all directions.

The group also sang I'm Going to My Graduation and Busy Days.

The kindergarten cast also performed a special number that featured greetings in various languages, including Carolinian, Chamorro, Japanese, Chinese, Thai, Tagalog, and Bangladeshi.

The students were also presented with awards that marked their official farewell to the kindergarten level. They were all commended for their efforts throughout the school year.

The two teachers responsible for the students were Chibora Wasisang and Lorraine Babauta.



Kindergarten students perform a musical number during the promotion ceremony yesterday.

SHAN SEMAN



SHAN SEMAN

There was no hiding of excitement among the San Antonio Kindergarten students as they awaited the start of their promotion ceremony yesterday at the school.



San Antonio Kindergarten students recite a Chinese greeting.

SHAN SEMAN

San Antonio Kindergarten student Mikayla Duenas recites a Carolinian greeting to the audience.



Michelle Fujihira
Commissioner's Award

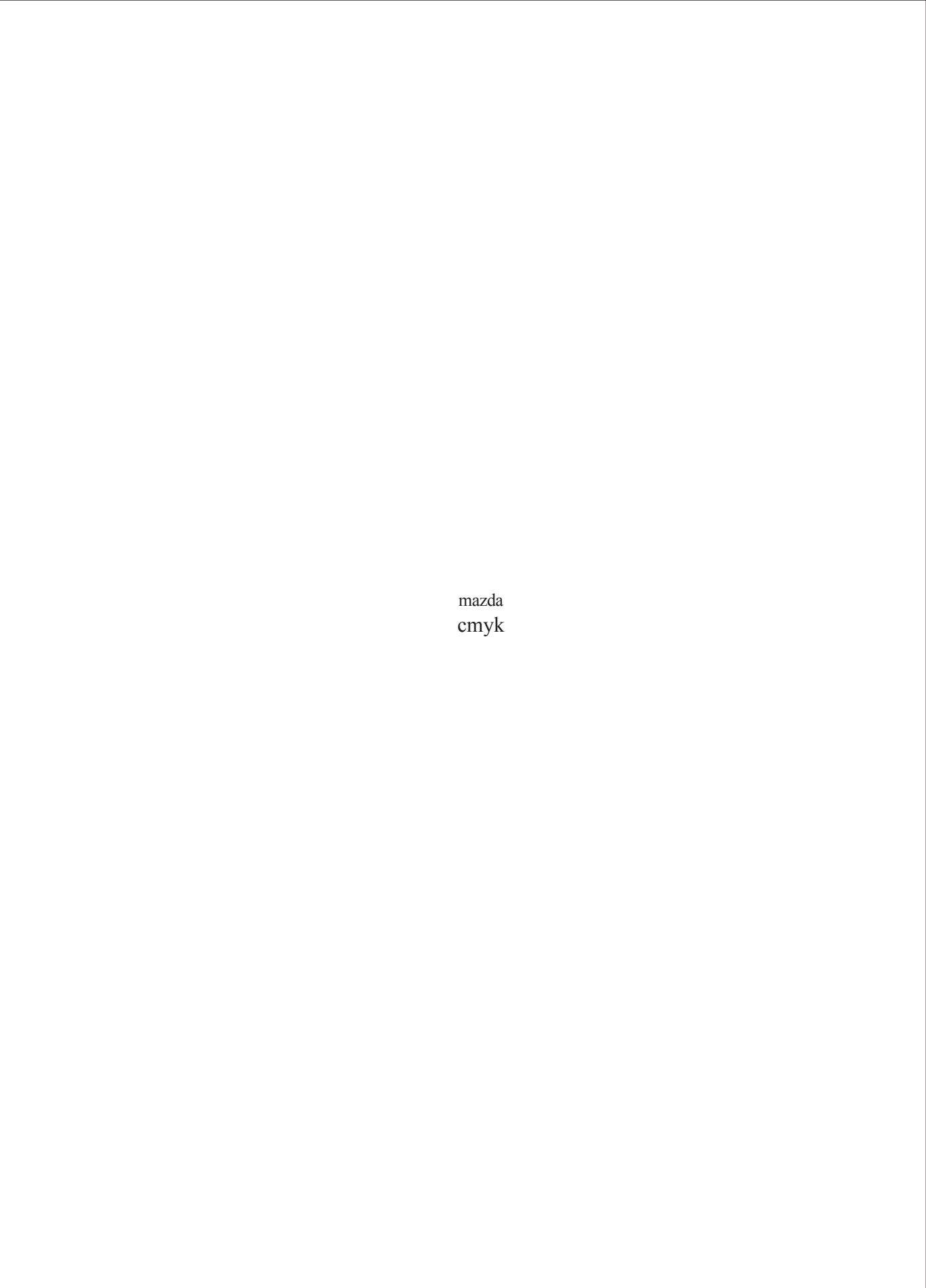
Elsiana Taitano
Principal's Award

CORRECTION

The captions that came out with this picture yesterday inadvertently switched the two. It should have read this way. Our apologies.

nilas
cnyk

Business



mazda
cmyk

Fledgling Tonga air services still on ground

NUKUALOFA, **Tonga** (Maganti Tonga/PIR)—Tonga might have a new domestic air service operating by June 9, but nobody knows for sure how or when it would begin.

It’s a question that worried tourist operators, stranded local people and frustrated visitors to Tonga have been asking since Royal Tongan Airlines’ domestic service came to a sudden end on May 17.

Meanwhile, unlicensed air operators are selling tickets for flights that have yet to happen.

Although there was talk that nine applications for a domestic air service license had been lodged with the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Director of Civil Aviation Viliami Ma’ake said on May 28 that only one airline, Pion Air of New Zealand, had applied. There were also letters of intent to offer a domestic service from Teta Tours and Fly Niu Airlines.

While safety assessments were

still being carried out, Pion Air, with its local affiliate Vava’u Airwave, went public and advertised its flying schedule and airfares. It even started selling tickets for its first flight, advertised to leave on Saturday May 29, but the flight didn’t happen.

Viliami Ma’ake said that Pion Air is a New Zealand company currently flying domestically in New Zealand and therefore the Civil Aviation of New Zealand first had to grant Pion Air with a license to come and operate domestically in Tonga, and after that the next step was for Pion Air to apply for a license to operate in Tonga.

“ Normally this kind of application takes about 90 days to be finalized and Pion Air just submitted its application on May 17 so it has not been a month yet”.

Meanwhile Fly Niu Airlines on May 31 announced that a DC3 aircraft would arrive in Tonga on June 3, with operations to start on June 9; but no one knows under what licensing.

Free graphics workshop for small biz owners

Are you thinking about trimming your business costs and doing more advertising and public relations work in-house? Are you thinking about accomplishing this task with that new computer you recently purchased but need some help getting started?

If you want hands on experience you’ll want to attend the Computer Graphics for Small Business Owners workshop that is being offered during the 7th Annual June Small Business Development Month in the CNMI. The workshop is one in a four part business series sponsored by the NMC Small Business Development Center and Commonwealth Development Authority.

This is hands-on workshop in a computer lab where attendees will learn the principles of the graphic design process, understand the basic features, guidelines and formats of type and images, the proper use of frames, boxes and borders, page layout, and work



Lee

with text, objects, frames, color, in creating professional-looking publications in Microsoft Publisher.

Larry Lee, who is the full-time busi-

ness and tourism instructor at Northern Marianas College, will present the workshop. He also owns and operates an advertising and graphic design firm in Saipan that has been in business for over fourteen years. The firm produces artwork, photographs, and promotional materials for the Marianas Visitors Authority, Pacific Islands Club Saipan, *Marianas Beach Press* magazine, *Beach Road* magazine, and Northern Marianas College.

Lee received a Global Master of Business Administration from National University in 2004, and a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Oregon State University in 1983.

Lee’s free-to-the-public workshop will be held on Saipan from 6pm to 9pm on Tuesday, June 8, at NMC in Building W, Room 2 (Computer Lab). Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. and space is limited so please telephone Robert Suzuki at 235-1551 to reserve your seat.

star & stripes

verizon
cmyk

Auto industry reports higher may sales

By SARAH KARUSH
AP WRITER

DETROIT (AP)—Auto sales rose 7 percent in May, as sky-rocketing gas prices apparently did little to dampen demand for pickups and sport utility vehicles. General Motors Corp., the world’s biggest automaker, said its sales were up 6.8 percent. Ford Motor Co. saw sales of its Ford, Lincoln and Mercury brands rise 1 percent, while DaimlerChrysler AG’s Chrysler Group reported that sales were 5.2 percent higher than in May 2003. GM’s truck sales soared 11.4 percent, while its car sales were level. Ford sold 1.7 percent more trucks, and 0.5 percent

fewer cars. Chrysler said its truck sales were up 7.8 percent, while car sales fell 2.9 percent. Asian companies saw more dramatic increases than domestic producers and benefited from greater truck sales. Nissan Motor Co., whose overall sales rose 28.4 percent, saw truck sales soar 68.4 percent. Toyota Motor Corp.’s sales rose 12.6 percent, including a 13.8 percent in truck sales. It was Toyota’s best-ever sales month with 202,420 vehicles sold—only the second time the company broke the 200,000 mark. The seasonally adjusted annual sales rate for May was 17.84 million units, compared

with 16.32 million in May 2003. The rate indicates what sales would be for the full year if they remained at the same pace for all 12 months. Full-year sales for 2003 were 16.7 million. “Industry sales have remained strong despite higher gas prices,” said Jim Press, vice president of Toyota’s U.S. sales division. “We have not seen a major shift to smaller, more fuel-efficient cars, and the light truck segment is still showing its strength.” GM chairman and chief executive Rick Wagoner acknowledged the continuing drop in sales of gas-guzzling Hummer models—they were off 30.5 percent last month—but said

the brand accounts for only a small portion of GM’s overall SUV business. “Hummers are down in part because they’re a fashion statement,” said Wagoner, speaking Wednesday at GM’s annual shareholder meeting in Wilmington, Del. “That’s completely predictable.” Wagoner said it’s anybody’s guess what happens in the coming months regarding gas prices, but he’s hopeful they’ll start to decline soon. “Our experts say it looks like fuel prices should be generally peaking out or, at least as we get into summer, they should be easing,” he said. “Time will tell on that.”

Ford sales analyst George Pipas said high gas prices might be “giving consumers pause,” but added that no dramatic shift in vehicle-buying habits had been seen. Only Honda Motor Co. cited a different trend. The company’s sales rose 14 percent, mostly due to cars, which were up 23.6 percent. Honda’s truck sales rose 0.8 percent. The company attributed its success to its wide offering of fuel-efficient models. Pipas said Ford needed to further trim its inventory. The company plans to trim third-quarter production by 4 percent compared to last year, he said. David Healy, an analyst

with Burnham Securities Inc., said Ford was losing market share in part because it had refused to match GM and Chrysler’s incentives. “They can get away with modestly higher prices than GM or Chrysler, but I think the gap now is too wide,” he said. On the whole, the industry boosted incentives in May after lackluster April sales. That helped balance out any concern over gas prices, analysts said. In trading Wednesday on the New York Stock Exchange, GM’s shares rose 36 cents to close at \$45.38. Ford’s shares were down 15 cents at \$14.89, while DaimlerChrysler’s U.S. shares rose 32 cents to \$44.59.

Airline execs pessimistic

WASHINGTON (AP)—The airline industry’s poor financial health could get even worse and, unless fuel prices fall or airfares rise, more furloughs and wage concessions are likely, according to testimony airline executives plan to present to Congress on Thursday. Chief executives from six airlines will offer members of a House transportation committee the latest snapshot of the industry’s woes. They are expected to reiterate concerns about the high costs of security, taxes and war risk insurance, and emphasize the threat that rising fuel poses to the industry’s nascent recovery. Gordon Bethune, the CEO of Continental Airlines and one of the executives testifying on Thursday, will describe the industry’s financial condition as “perilous, and the skies are only getting darker,” according to prepared testimony obtained by The Associated Press. “All-time high oil prices and the ever-increasing burden

of government taxes and fees are killing the industry.” “Unless fuel prices abate, or the revenue environment improves, we will have to furlough employees and seek wage and benefit concessions,” Bethune warns. “We may also have to reduce our pension funding.” The run-up in oil prices has resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars of additional jet fuel costs for several carriers in 2004. In light of this fact, the industry has routinely criticized the Bush administration’s policy of filling the nation’s Strategic Petroleum Reserve of oil at a time when each barrel costs nearly \$40, saying that extra demand has helped keep fuel prices high. Executives speaking on Thursday are also expected to highlight the steps their companies have taken—in United’s case, through Chapter 11 proceedings—to operate more efficiently amid fierce competition for budget-conscious fliers.

OPEC members back plan to hike oil output

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP)—Several OPEC members expressed support Wednesday for a Saudi plan to raise the group’s oil production ceiling by 10.6 percent in the hope of calming jittery markets and reducing crude prices from near record heights. Oil prices sank more than 5 percent in trading in New York and London. A more radical proposal by Algeria for the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to suspend its output ceiling altogether appeared to win no immediate backing. OPEC representatives arriving in Beirut expressed a common desire to send a strong signal to oil markets that the group would boost production and ensure that crude supplies remained plentiful. They gathered for joint talks ahead of a

formal meeting Thursday on OPEC’s production policy. A suspected al-Qaida terror attack on oil worker compounds in Saudi Arabia over the weekend stunned markets that were already nervous about stretched oil inventories, Middle East tensions and a possible shortfall in supply. U.S. crude prices shot up to record levels in response but retreated somewhat Wednesday as Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Ali Naimi stressed that Saudi Arabia was taking adequate security measures at its strategic facilities for collecting and exporting oil. “I assure you that the kingdom and all OPEC members are concerned ... and we don’t want high prices,” he said in a speech at the Beirut offices of the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

nmhc plumeria
cmyk

Orders for big-ticket goods fall in April

By JEANNINE AVERSA
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—Orders to factories for big-ticket goods fell sharply in April after a strong gain in the previous month, reflecting the sometimes bumpy recovery by manufacturers.

The Commerce Department reported Wednesday that orders for “durables”—costly manufactured goods expected to last at least three years—dropped by 2.9 percent last month. It was the biggest decline since September 2002.

April’s slackening in demand for big-ticket goods came after sizable gains in February and

March, where orders went up by 3.9 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively.

In other economic news, new-home sales fell by 11.8 percent in April from the month before to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.09 million units, the lowest level since November, the department said in a second report.

The decline, which followed a 9.7 percent jump in March that left sales at a record high pace of 1.24 million units, came as mortgage rates climbed. The average rate on a 30-year mortgage in April was 5.83 percent, compared with 5.45 percent in March.

David Seiders, chief econo-

mist at the National Association of Home Builders, did not see the drop in April’s sales, the biggest in 10 years, as worrisome. Looking ahead, he believes that an improved job climate should help offset the impact of higher mortgage rates, making for healthy housing activity this year.

In financial markets, the Dow Jones industrials lost 7.73 points to close at 10,109.89.

On the manufacturing front, economists were predicting a drop in big-ticket orders for April given the robust demand in March, but they were forecasting a smaller, 0.8 percent decline.

While the larger than

expected drop was disappointing, it was viewed as temporary rather than a harbinger of an unraveling of manufacturing’s recovery.

“Manufacturing is recovering well, and I fully expect that to continue for many months,” said economist Ken Mayland, president of ClearView Economics. Even with the drop in April, orders for big-ticket goods are up an impressive 12.4 percent from a year ago, he pointed out.

Other recent reports, including one released by the Federal Reserve this month, suggested that manufacturing activity was healthy in April.

Gas prices don’t seem to bother car sales

DETROIT (AP)—Heavy discounting of new cars and trucks appears to be offsetting concerns about rising gasoline prices, even when it comes to the sale of big pickups and sport utility vehicles, analysts and auto executives say.

“We haven’t seen any statistically relevant changes of volumes ... within a car line or between the different styles,” Chrysler Group chief executive Dieter Zetsche said Wednesday evening at an exhibit opening at the Walter P. Chrysler Museum in Auburn Hills.

“Obviously we’re watching that carefully,” he added, noting that Chrysler’s May sales are faring well.

Goldman Sachs analyst Gary Lapidus predicts new vehicle sales in May to be up 5 percent from a year ago, despite gas prices that are a half-dollar-a-gallon more than this time last year. Other analysts are forecasting sales to be up 1 percent to 5 percent, giving a

kick to what’s been a somewhat sluggish sales year so far. Major automakers report May sales results Wednesday.

“We see little evidence that high gasoline prices are deterring light truck buyers,” Lapidus said in a research note Wednesday.

Several dealers around the country say shoppers often mention fuel prices, and some customers have chosen smaller models with better fuel efficiency, but most still seem unfazed by prices at the pump.

Still, sales of fuel-efficient gas-electric hybrids continue to rise. Toyota’s U.S. arm reported its eighth consecutive best-ever April sales tally last month, helped in part by strong demand for its hybrid Prius sedan. Honda, the only other automaker currently selling a hybrid vehicle on the U.S. retail market, said its Civic hybrid posted a second consecutive month of record sales in April.

Many dealers have waiting lists for the Prius and Civic hybrids.

Previously owned home sales up in April

WASHINGTON (AP)—Scrambling to lock in a deal before mortgage rates move higher, buyers propelled sales of previously owned homes in April to the second-best month on record.

The National Association of Realtors reported Tuesday that sales of existing homes clocked in at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 6.64 million last month, representing a 2.5 percent increase over March.

The pace of April’s sales was second only to the all-time monthly high rate of 6.68 million in September 2003.

April’s performance surpassed economists’ expectations. They were forecasting sales to dip to a rate of around 6.45 million.

The strong showing comes even as mortgage rates have been climbing in anticipation of an interest rate increase by the Federal Reserve. Economists

believe the Fed could order its first rate increase in more than four years next month.

The average rate on a 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage was 5.83 percent in April, up from 5.45 percent in March. Although rates on 30-year mortgages dropped last week to 6.30 percent after an eight-week rise, Lereah predicts rates will creep up to 6.6 percent by the end of the year.

“Part of what we’re seeing now is fence-jumping from people wanting to buy a home before interest rates move higher,” said David Lereah, the association’s chief economist.

Higher mortgage rates should start to slow homes sales around June, Lereah said. Even if that turns out to be the case, he and other economists predict sales for all of 2004 will be close to the record high levels posted in 2003.

micropac

dial rent

dial rent

dial rent

Asia

RP opposition says it has evidence of fraud

By JIM GOMEZ
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A lawyer for a leading presidential contender presented evidence Wednesday of what he claimed was fraud in last month's Philippines elections by incumbent Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's camp.

Arroyo's main rival, movie star Fernando Poe Jr., has repeatedly accused the president's supporters of cheating in the May 10 polls and has long promised to

present evidence. Arroyo has denied the allegations.

An official count of the votes is ongoing and is expected to be completed later this month. Independent counts have declared Arroyo the winner.

At a press conference Wednesday, Poe's lawyer Rufus Rodriguez presented documents purportedly showing five instances of inaccurate vote counts.

They showed a breakdown of ballot tallies in two provinces, two towns and a city—which got forwarded to Manila for the

final national count—showing vote totals for Poe had been reduced and those for Arroyo increased when compared to other documents from those areas.

The other documents were from the southern provinces of Basilan and Lanao del Norte, the towns of Sumisip and Tinglayan in the north and the southern city of Marawi.

Rodriguez claimed that he

had evidence of inaccurate counting in at least 25 of the Philippines' 176 provinces. But he did not present any other documents.

Poe's camp has claimed that Arroyo cheated him of more than 2 million votes—more than enough to offset claims by Arroyo's camp that she won by 1.1 million votes.

"We don't want to proclaim a president who did not win and who did not have the mandate



Arroyo

of the people," Rodriguez said.

An opposition lawmaker also petitioned the Supreme Court on Wednesday to declare unconstitutional a 22-member Congressional committee tasked with tallying the votes.

Poe's camp has argued that

the constitution requires all Congressional lawmakers to take part in the count. Pro-Arroyo legislators, who are in majority in Congress and in the canvassing committee, favor a smaller body in hopes of avoiding lengthy debates.

RP govt to resume peace talks with rebels in Oslo

By OLIVER TEVES
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Peace talks aimed at ending a 35-year communist insurgency in the Philippines will resume in Norway later this month focusing on proposed economic and social reforms as part of a political settlement, negotiators said Wednesday.

Fidel Agcaoili—a negotiator for the Marxist umbrella group National Democratic Front—said the negotiations will take place in Oslo from June 22-25.

But he said the inclusion of some of the NDF's factions and members on U.S. and EU terrorism lists will continue to be a major hindrance to the talks.

"It is an issue that will be raised for as long as the list is there," he said.

During the last round of negotiations, the government stopped

short of urging other countries to drop the rebels from their terrorist lists, but it promised to highlight progress made by the guerrillas toward peace.

Silvestre Bello III, the chief government negotiator, said the rebels "may prove the point that they are not terrorists" by halting attacks.

A joint committee is working on details of an economic and social reform accord, which is expected to be presented when the two sides meet in Oslo.

Agcaoili said the accord will cover broad areas that both parties "find necessary to bring about fundamental social changes." It will include issues such as land reform, national industrialization, and economic sovereignty.

Norway is brokering the talks to end Asia's longest-running rebellion, which has killed thousands.

Surgeons operate on conjoined Filipino boys

NEW YORK (AP)—Surgeons operated on 2-year-old Filipino twins joined at the top of their heads Wednesday to insert plastic tissue expanders designed to help the boys grow extra skin to cover their heads after they are separated.

Carl and Clarence Aguirre have undergone a series of operations since last October in a gradual approach to separate them, with surgeons opening windows in the skull area to carefully push their brains apart and divide the blood vessels between them.

In Wednesday's procedure, surgeons at Montefiore Medical Center inserted the tissue expanders just under the skin behind the boys' left ears.

Twice before, infections developed around the expanders and they had to be removed. This time, the procedure was done independent of any other surgery, whereas previously it was done while the twins were undergoing major operations on the blood vessels around their brains.

Dr. David Staffenberg, the twins' plastic surgeon, said

doctors deduced that because of the complexity of the separation surgeries, the twins could not physically tolerate the insertion of tissue expanders at the same time.

In a statement released by the hospital Wednesday, Staffenberg said, "Carl and Clarence did great. We're happy with the way the expanders went in." Hospital spokesman Steve Osborne said the boys were in the operating room for just over three hours.

He said the boys' mother, Arlene Aguirre, was "all smiles."

An operating room technician, Kathy David, crocheted two sets of mittens for the boys to wear afterward to keep them from trying to remove the bandages covering the incisions, Osborne said. The boys wore them as they were taken back to the intensive care unit to shake off their anesthesia, he said.

Osborne said the expanders were filled with 10 cubic centimeters of a saline solution. After three weeks of healing, another 10 cubic centimeters will be inserted every three days to stretch the skin.

Taliban claims killing Afghan aid workers

By **AMIR SHAH**
AP WRITER

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Three foreign medical workers and two Afghans were killed Wednesday when their car was ambushed in northwestern Afghanistan, police and the aid agency said. Resurgent Taliban militants claimed responsibility. The assault was the deadliest on foreign aid workers since the U.S.-led ouster of the Taliban regime in late 2001, and was bound to raise new security fears that already prevent agencies from operating in much of the insurgency-hit south and east.

The group was ambushed in Khair Khana, a village in Badghis province 340 miles west of Kabul, provincial police chief Amir Shah Naibzada told The Associated Press.

An official at aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres, which runs several clinics in the province, said three of its foreign staff and two Afghans died in what “seemed to be a terrorist-type attack,” but added that details were still murky.

An MSF news release later said the foreign victims were a Belgian woman and a Dutch man and a Norwegian man. The MSF said they were members of a medical team, but it did not give their specific jobs.

Naibzada said it was unclear if they were the victims of

anti-government militants or robbers. “It’s too early to say who’s behind this,” he said by telephone from a car rushing him to the scene.

But Mullah Abdul Hakim Latifi, a purported spokesman for the Taliban, called AP and said it carried out the attack at 4 p.m. and gave the location where it took place. He threatened more attacks would follow.

“The Taliban was responsible for this attack,” Latifi said. “Those international aid workers were working for the policy of America. There will be more of these attacks in the future.”

Badghis province is far from where most of the 20,000 U.S. troops deployed in the hunt for Taliban and al-Qaida holdouts in the south and east of the country are operating. Several dozen U.S. troops are based in neighboring Herat.

Rebels of the former ruling Taliban regime and al-Qaida, active in the south and east of the country, have targeted aid workers over the past year in an apparent attempt to undermine efforts by the U.S.-backed government to rebuild the country after a quarter century of war.

A remote-control bomb exploded Wednesday in eastern Nangarhar province, injuring two Afghan election workers, said Gen. Mohammed Mustafa, an Afghan border security official.

Three other Afghans in the ve-

hicle escaped unhurt from the blast, in Momand Dara area, about 20 miles east of the provincial capital Jalalabad, Mustafa said.

Security is also poor in areas of the north, because of the continuing influence of rival warlords. Armed robberies are regularly reported in the region. But attacks by suspected Taliban militants are rarely reported in the north.

“It’s the first time anything like this has happened here,” Badghis Gov. Azizullah Afzali said.

Growing violence in recent months—including killings of NATO peacekeepers in the capital and attacks on U.S. forces—has cast a long shadow over plans for general elections in September, seen as key to rehabilitating the war-battered nation.

Last week, a senior European Union official accused troops with the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan of endangering humanitarian workers by operating in civilian vehicles and clothes, raising local hostility, and said that 23 aid workers had been killed in Afghanistan since March 2003.

In May, gunmen killed three U.N. election workers, including two British security consultants, in eastern Nuristan province. The Taliban claimed responsibility. Two other foreigners were found bludgeoned to death in Kabul the same month, but the motive for the killings remain unclear.

CPA

Japan mourns girl, 12, slain by classmate

By NATALIE OBIKO PEARSON
AP WRITER

TOKYO (AP)—Police examined e-mails and cell phone messages and investigated reports of a playground dispute in a search Wednesday for the motive behind the killing of a 12-year-old girl who was slashed with a box-cutter by a classmate in southern Japan.

Shocked education officials, meanwhile, called for teachers to review school curriculums emphasizing compassion and respect for human life.

“It is a terrible pity that an incident like this occurred within school grounds. I would like to ask you all to once again take extra measures to ensure an incident like this never happens again,” said Yasunao Seki, an official at the Education Ministry, speaking at a meeting convened for school authorities.

Some schools said they would carry out classroom inspections and lock up sharp tools.

“We’re taking another look at how to teach the children about the preciousness of human life,” said Hidehito Komori, headmaster of an elementary school just north of Tokyo.

On Tuesday, the 11-year-old killer led Satomi Mitarai to an empty classroom during their lunch hour, slit her neck and arms with a box-cutter, and left her to bleed to death.

Mitarai’s body was discovered in the third-floor classroom by a teacher after the suspect returned smeared in blood, said principal Eiko Desaki.

An official involved with the investigation, Masanori Nakamura, told reporters the suspect’s parents were shocked by their daughter’s actions.

“Her parents said they haven’t had any trouble raising her, and that her grades were good, she is a reliable kid and tries hard,” he said.

Police were investigating the possibility that the killing stemmed from a dispute the two girls had over the Internet.

Local media reports told the story of a friendship between two classmates—who regularly left notes on each other’s home pages and used text messaging—suddenly going awry.

The daily Asahi Shimbun’s Web site quoted the suspect as telling investigators that, “I didn’t think what she wrote on the home page was funny, so I called her out (of the classroom). I meant to kill her.”

Other students recalled the two girls fighting during a recent school sporting event, Nippon Television Network reported.

The suspect was transferred from police custody to juvenile detention while her case goes to family court. Police did not release her name, in accordance

with Japanese legal protections for juvenile offenders.

Parents, teachers and students shaken by the tragedy grieved at Okubo Elementary School, in Sasebo, 650 miles southwest of Tokyo, at a special assembly.

“We’re worried about how to take care of children who were traumatized by it,” said Junichiro Kamogawa, Sasebo city board of education official.

The murder has appalled Japan, where a dramatic spike in juvenile delinquency and school violence in the past decade has shaken deeply held beliefs that the country is largely immune to the violence of Europe and the United States.

Last July, a 12-year-old boy in Nagasaki—a city just north of Sasebo—was accused of kidnapping, molesting and killing a 4-year-old by shoving him off the roof of a car garage.

Three years ago, lawmakers lowered the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 14 amid public outrage over the beheading of a 10-year-old boy by a 14-year-old in 1997.

According to the National Police Agency, 21,539 children under age 14 were arrested in 2003, up 5.2 percent from the previous year. The number of serious crimes—murder and robbery—was still small, however, at 212 cases, although it was a 32 percent increase from the previous year.

CPA

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Pakistan top cop fired following unrest

By **ZARAR KHAN**
AP WRITER

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP)—The Karachi police chief was fired Wednesday, and the government promised more changes after three days of unrest that has left at least 26 people dead and brought Pakistan’s largest city to a standstill. Government officials struggled to explain what was behind the wave of violence, with one

accusing al-Qaida of trying to spark sectarian fighting between the Sunni Muslim majority and the Shiite minority. The chief minister of Sindh province, Ali Muhammad Maher, met with security chiefs to discuss the worsening situation in the city of 14 million people, triggered by the assassination of a prominent Sunni cleric Sunday and the suicide bombing of a Shiite mosque a day later. The death toll in the mosque attack rose to 21 on Wednesday, after a 30-year-old man died of his injuries. No one has claimed responsibility for either attack. Rioting by Sunni and Shiite mobs followed the attacks, with most violence—including gun-fire—aimed at hundreds of riot police deployed in different neighborhoods. Shops, cars, buses and government buildings were set afire. Four people, all civilians, died in exchanges of gunfire. Karachi police chief Asad Malik and two other senior officers were transferred Wednesday, police spokesman Mughis Pirzada said. No explanation was given and no replacements announced. “We cannot leave Karachi to the mercy of terrorists and we cannot afford any negligence when the lives and property of people are involved,” Maher said. “The police have to work to control the situation and bring Karachi back to normal.”

Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed promised more “administrative changes” in Sindh province and its capital Karachi within 10 days. Police closed roads and took positions outside the U.S. Consulate, a frequent target of terrorist attack in recent years, after a Shiite group announced plans to demonstrate there. But by late Wednesday, no protesters had turned up. The rioters have vented anger at U.S. interests, with mobs chanting “Death to America” and burning KFC and McDonalds restaurants. Anti-U.S. feeling grew in Pakistan after President Gen. Pervez Musharraf allied the country with Washington in the war on terror after Sept. 11, 2001. Karachi is a flashpoint for Pakistan’s religious and ethnic divisions and the city has a history of Sunni-Shiite conflict. The metropolis had been showing signs of calm in recent months until a bombing at Shiite mosque May 7 that killed 22 people. That bombing was followed by violence during by-elections that left 10 dead and the twin car-bombing a week ago near the residence of the U.S. Consul-General that killed a policeman and wounded 40 others. Religious Affairs Minister Ijazul Haq told a news conference in the capital, Islamabad, that the most recent violence was “al-Qaida related.”



Part of shopping mall collapses in Bangkok

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—Part of a shopping mall whose top floors were under demolition collapsed into occupied floors below Wednesday, injuring at least 10 people, two of them seriously, police and rescue workers said. Several others were believed trapped inside the rubble at the 11-story New World Department Store in downtown Bangkok, said Boonyakirt Vichianrak, the head of a rescue team. He said demolition workers had hollowed out the mall from the fifth to the top floor, but the lower floors were still occupied by tenants, including beauty salons and shops selling clothes and curios. He said customers at a hair salon on the ground level reported the ceiling caving in on them, injuring seven people, two seriously. Three rescue workers were also injured, he said. The building in Bangkok’s Banglampoo area was apparently part of a legal dispute with city authorities for having added extra floors without permission, Police Lt. Col. Vicharn Borirakkul said. It is not clear how many floors were added.

Fired Nepal PM named premier

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP)—A former prime minister fired two years ago for alleged incompetence was named prime minister again Wednesday by the king amid political turmoil in this Himalayan nation. Faced with increasing street protests, a violent Maoist insurgency and political paralysis, King Gyanendra named Sher Bahadur Deuba to the country’s top political position “with a task of holding general elections,” according to a statement released by the palace. In October 2002, Gyanendra fired Deuba, accusing him of incompetence and of failing to end the Maoist insurgency. The king dissolved Parliament, assumed executive powers and appointed a new government. On Wednesday, though, Deuba was summoned to the palace to be re-appointed to his old job. “My responsibility will be to restore peace and conduct the parliamentary elections,” he said.

Report: China takes activists from homes

BEIJING (AP)—Three Chinese activists have been removed from their homes just ahead of the June 4 anniversary of the 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing, a human rights group said Wednesday. The dissidents have been forced to stay in hotels outside Beijing, said the Hong Kong-based Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy. Two other prominent activists, Liu Xiaobo and Jiang Yan-yong, could no longer be contacted by telephone and may also have been taken away by authorities, it said. Telephone calls to Liu’s home were not answered. An answering machine picked up at Jiang’s number. Liu is well-known for his essays criticizing the government for charging Internet dissidents with subversion. Jiang, a military surgeon, petitioned the government to admit it made mistakes in crushing the Tiananmen protests.

French general: US had Osama within reach

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan had Osama bin Laden “within reach” on at least two occasions, but were unable to prevent him from slipping away, France’s top general said Wednesday. French chief of staff Gen. Henri Bentegeat, said the al-Qaida leader has evaded capture several times since 2002, but not recently. He didn’t say where bin Laden had been tracked down, and refused to comment on whether French special forces operating in southern Afghanistan were involved. “Several times the coalition has had Osama bin Laden directly within reach,” Bentegeat told reporters during a visit to the Afghan capital. “But between locating a person and arresting them there is a gap tied to all the uncertainties of all operations of this kind.” A spokeswoman for the U.S. military in Kabul had no immediate comment on the general’s remarks.

SAIPANCELL
EXPANDED HOME
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Sudan government, rebels sign peace pact

NAIVASHA, Kenya (AP)—Sudan’s government and rebels signed key agreements on Wednesday, resolving the last remaining issues needed to end Africa’s longest-running conflict.

The adversaries signed three protocols on power-sharing and how to administer three disputed areas in central Sudan, wrapping up outstanding issues that had prevented them from reaching a final deal.

All that remains for the government and the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Army to work out are procedural matters to end the 21-year civil war, in which more than 2 million people have died, mostly from war-induced famine.

The peace process taking place in Naivasha, 60 miles northwest of Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, does not include insurgents fighting a separate rebellion in Darfur region of western Sudan.

It could take months to determine whether the diplomatic solution will translate to peace on the ground. The signing of the agreements on Wednesday was delayed for several hours because of last-minute disputes over power-sharing.

A Western diplomat at the

talks said U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell telephoned rebel leader John Garang to discuss the delays.

In Washington, U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the signing will trigger a process leading to the establishment of normal relations with Sudan if certain conditions are met.

Boucher said these include the completion of a comprehensive peace agreement to end the southern conflict and an end to the violence in Darfur, where a 15-month rebellion has made more than 1 million people homeless.

France: No religion in EU Constitution

PARIS (AP)—The French prime minister said Wednesday there is no need for Christian references in the European Union’s hotly debated constitution.

“The European project is secular,” said Jean-Pierre Raffarin. “Our future is a European society which should include secularism as a founding value.”

France and Belgium have strongly opposed including religious references in a draft constitution. But Italy and Poland, backed by Pope John Paul II, want the charter to acknowledge Christianity’s role in Europe.

Raffarin, speaking on France Inter radio, said there was “no reason” to amend the draft, which says the EU draws “inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe.”

“The Christian heritage of Europe is clear. It cannot be contested. It is something that is engraved in our history,” Raffarin said.

But he added: “I do not see a consensus today among union member countries for a shift on this text.”

Foreign Minister Michel Barnier, speaking in France’s parliament Wednesday, also defended the draft.

“Everyone can recognize themselves in this text, whatever their faith, convictions and philosophy,” he said.

The place of religion in the charter’s preamble has been hotly debated since negotiations on the constitution began in 2002. Foreign ministers from Poland, Italy, Portugal, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia and the Czech Republic this week proposed that “the Christian roots of Europe” be looked at again in discussions on the text.

The constitution seeks to simplify decision-making in the EU and prevent a minority of states from blocking decisions.

Amnesty: US flouting human rights

By JANE WARDELL
AP WRITER

LONDON (AP)—The United States and its supporters in the war against terror are flouting human rights in the pursuit of a global security agenda that has made the world more dangerous, Amnesty International said Wednesday.

The abuse of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. troops was the consequence of a Bush administration policy “to pick and choose which bits of international law it will apply and where,” the group’s secretary general, Irene Khan, said in presenting the annual assessment of human rights.

Khan condemned attacks by terror groups such as al-Qaida, but said the U.S. response was driving the most sustained erosion of human rights and international law in 50 years.

“As a strategy, the war on terror is bankrupt of vision and bereft of principle,” Khan said. “Sacrificing human rights in the name of national security, turning a blind eye to abuse abroad and using pre-emptive military force where and when the powerful choose to act has damaged justice and freedom, and made the world a more dangerous and divided place.”

Asked about the report’s assertions, White House spokesman Scott McClellan said, “I dismiss that.”



Khan

“The war on terrorism has protected the human rights of some 25 million people in Afghanistan, and some 25 million people in Iraq,” he said in Washington. “The war on terror has led to the liberation of some 50 million people in those countries, and the United States is a leader when it comes to protecting human rights, and we will continue to be.”

Kahn said Amnesty wrote to the British and U.S. governments a year ago detailing allegations of torture, ill-treatment, deaths in custody and other abuses in Iraq.

“We have some form of response from the British and none to this date from the Americans,” she said.

“It seems that accountability in Washington D.C. is better generated by Kodak,” she said, referring to the recent publication of photographs of U.S.

troops abusing and humiliating Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad.

Amnesty said it was denied access to both Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, where the United States is holding hundreds of foreign nationals in indefinite detention.

It said it has credible reports that a Chinese government delegation was sent to Guantanamo in September 2002 to help interrogate Uighur Muslims being held there and used techniques including having inmates stand for long periods and depriving them of sleep.

The report criticized Spain, France and Uzbekistan, among other nations, for what it called “regressive” anti-terrorist legislation and restrictions on freedom since the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

Britain was singled out for holding 14 foreign nationals under anti-terrorism laws that allow indefinite detention without charges.

British police disclosed last month that more than half the 572 people arrested in anti-terror raids in Britain since Sept. 11, 2001, were released without charge, and fewer than one in five were charged with terrorism-related offenses.

Khan said governments around the world were flouting human rights “with impunity and audacity” in the name of the war on terror.

Science & Technology

Life & Style



Ella Gunderson, 11, pulls an outfit from her bedroom closet in Redmond, Wash., Monday, May 31, 2004.

Girls pushing for modest fashion options

By KRISTEN GELINEAU
AP WRITER

During a recent shopping trip to Nordstrom, 11-year-old Ella Gunderson became frustrated with all the low-cut hip-huggers and skintight tops. So she wrote to the Seattle-based chain's executives to complain. The industry has been getting the message: A more modest look is in, fashion experts say.

The shy, bespectacled red-head has since become an instant media darling, appearing on national television over the past two weeks to promote modest fashions instead of the saucy looks popularized by the likes of Britney Spears.

"We like to call this new girl Miss Modesty," said Gigi Solif Schanen, fashion editor at Seventeen magazine. "It's such a different feeling but still very pretty and feminine and sexy. It's just a little more covered up."

Shoppers are starting to see higher waistlines and lower

hemlines, and tweeds, fitted blazers and layers are expected to be big this fall, Schanen said.

"It's kind of like a sexy take on a librarian," she said. "I think people are tired of seeing so much skin and want to leave a little more to the imagination."

The Web sites ModestApparelUSA.com and ModestByDesign.com—where the slogan is "Clothing your father would be proud of"—report that sales have skyrocketed over the past 18 months.

Many youngsters are frustrated by the profusion of racy teenage clothing, according to Buzz Marketing, a New Jersey-based firm that compiles feedback from teen advisers.

"There is just sensory overload. Kids are going to say enough already," said Buzz's 24-year-old chief executive, Tina Wells. "The next big trend I see is kids are going to look like monks."

In 2002, a group of Arizona teens submitted a petition to the Phoenix division of the

Dillard's department store chain asking for more modest clothes. The chain began carrying more conservative styles.

Nordstrom spokeswoman Deniz Anders said the company has been hearing for about two years from customers who want more modest looks, and Nordstrom tries to carry a broad array of styles in its stores.

The arrival of the modest look is good news for Ella, who last week participated in a sold-out "Pure Fashion" show in Bellevue with 37 other girls belonging to a Roman Catholic youth organization.

Ella, who paraded down the catwalk in a long-sleeved pink top and a shiny pink skirt, hopes the fashion show—and her letter—will prompt some change.

"There can be more than one look," the Redmond youngster said in an interview while wearing a loose Pure Fashion T-shirt, jeans and hot pink flip-flops. "Everybody should have lots of choices."

urban outlet
+red

Paul McCartney talks about past drug use

LONDON (AP)—Paul McCartney says he got no thrill from heroin, but found cocaine more to his liking for a time.

"I tried heroin just the once," McCartney said in interview published Wednesday in the Daily Mirror newspaper about his drug use in decades past.

"Even then, I didn't realize I'd taken it. I was just handed something, smoked it, then found out what it was.

"It didn't do anything for me, which was lucky because I wouldn't have fancied heading down that road," the former Beatle was quoted as saying. The full interview is published this week in Uncut magazine.

McCartney's drug use has resulted in at least one brush with

the law. A planned tour of Japan in 1980 was derailed when the singer was arrested at Tokyo's airport for possession of marijuana and later deported.

Despite enjoying cocaine for a time, he said he eventually turned against the drug.

"I did cocaine for about a year around the time of Sgt. Pepper," he said, referring to The Beatles' 1967 album.

"Coke and maybe some grass to balance it out. I was never completely crazy with cocaine.

"I'd been introduced to it and at first it seemed OK, like anything that's new and stimulating.

"When you start working your way through it, you start thinking: 'Mmm, this is not so cool

an idea,' especially when you start getting those terrible comedowns," McCartney said. He confirmed that drugs influenced some of the group's songs.

"A song like 'Got to Get You Into My Life,' that's directly about pot, although everyone missed it at the time," McCartney said.

"'Day Tripper,' that's one about acid (LSD). 'Lucy in the Sky,' that's pretty obvious. There's others that make subtle hints about drugs, but, you know, it's easy to overestimate the influence of drugs on the Beatles' music."

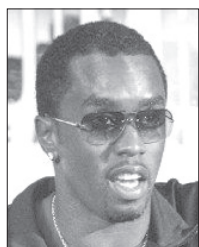
John Lennon, who wrote "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," had denied the song was about drugs and said it was inspired by a nursery school drawing by his son, Julian.

Judgment against 'P. Diddy' overturned

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)—The North Carolina Court of Appeals has overturned a civil judgment ordering rapper Sean "P. Diddy" Combs to pay \$450,000 to a man who claimed he was beaten by bodyguards the rapper had hired.

The ruling came Tuesday in a lawsuit filed by Cedrick Bobby Lemon, who said he was beaten in June 1995 by bodyguards Combs hired to protect soul singer Mary J. Blige at a concert in Winston-Salem. Combs was Blige's manager.

Because Combs didn't respond to the complaint within the time required by law, a Forsyth County Superior Court judge ruled in Lemon's favor and ordered a default judgment against Combs. But the appeals court found that Lemon didn't meet other requirements when he requested the default judgment and overturned it.



"P. Diddy"

Simpson sues producer-promoter

NEW YORK (AP)—Singer Jessica Simpson has filed a breach of contract lawsuit claiming a New Jersey producer-promoter owes her \$140,000.

Simpson's lawsuit, filed Tuesday in Manhattan's state Supreme Court, says she agreed to perform for an hour on Oct. 23, 2003, at the Grand Prix of Puerto Rico. She also agreed to wear a T-shirt imprinted with the logo "MOTOROCK," an auto racing company, while filming a music video.

A contract specifying Simpson's obligations for the appearance in San Juan was signed by her agents—her father, Joe Simpson, and Wilhelmina Artist Management—and Mike Zaccaro as president of the event promoter, 4 Dog Productions.

Zaccaro's company agreed to pay the singer in two installments before the performance—\$14,000 by Oct. 8 and \$126,000 by Oct. 22. But on Oct. 10, court papers say, 4 Dog Productions canceled the performance and hasn't paid Simpson, 23, anything.

Neither Zaccaro nor his company could be reached for comment.

Simpson's lawsuit, which had been filed in federal court in April before being transferred to state court, asks for \$140,000 plus interest and legal fees.



Jessica Simpson performs during the 102.7 KIIS-FM's Wango Tango On-Air 2004 concert at Rose Bowl Stadium in Pasadena, Calif., in this May 15, 2004 file photo.

AP

Ex-'Family Ties' actor accused of DUI

BOULDER, Colo. (AP)—Brian Bonsall, the youngest member of the Keaton clan on television's "Family Ties," was arrested last week on suspicion of drunken driving.

Bonsall, 22, was arrested early Friday by police who said they saw someone vomit out the passenger side window of his car.

Asked how much he had to drink, Bonsall responded, "Plenty," then failed a roadside test.

Police said a blood test showed he had "excess alcohol content" but did not disclose the exact amount.

Bonsall, who lives in Boulder, starred as Andy Keaton for three seasons on the NBC sitcom

in the late 1980s that helped launch the career of Michael J. Fox. Bonsall later appeared in episodes of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and the 1993 film "Father Hood."

Bonsall was convicted of drunken driving in 2001 and his license was suspended, police said.

'Idol' runner-up to release her own single

NEW YORK (AP)—Diana DeGarmo came in second place on "American Idol," but she already has plans to release a single.

DeGarmo's first song is scheduled to come out June 22 through RCA Records, according to the record company's Web site.

The bubbly 16-year-old from Snellville, Ga., was the runner-up last week on the Fox TV singing competition. "Idol" winner Fantasia Barrino topped her by just 1.3 million votes out of more than 65 million votes cast.

Barrino, a 19-year-old from High Point, N.C., is working on her first single, which is due out June 15. She and DeGarmo both performed the song, titled "I Believe," during last week's finale.

Coming in second isn't so bad, though - last season's runner-up, Clay Aiken, went on to sell more than 2 million copies of his debut disc and enjoys just as much fame as the



"American Idol" finalist Diana DeGarmo smiles after performing her first song during the finale of the music competition show Tuesday, May 25, 2004, at the Kodak Theatre in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles.

winner, Ruben Studdard.

Both singers and the other 10

"Idol" finalists will go on tour starting July 14 in Salt Lake City.

Teen's aggressive advances frighten friend of his mom's

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: My friend "Sally" has a 14-year-old son I'll call Derek. He recently made sexual advances toward me. What frightened me was Derek's refusal to accept that I meant no when I refused and informed him that what he had in mind was immoral and illegal.

I threw the kid out of my house, called Sally, and asked her to keep her son away from me and my home. She refused to take me seriously.

The next day, I sent Sally a special delivery letter, repeating in writing how I felt about what Derek had done.

Abby, I understand that Derek is at an age when his hormones are raging, but his behavior was repulsive and offensive. I am afraid of him because he's bigger than I am—and because he's been seen around my house late at night, according to one of my neighbors.

I live alone. Is there something I should do to protect myself? Or should I just wait to see what happens?

FRIGHTENED BY
A 14-YEAR-OLD PREDATOR

DEAR FRIGHTENED: If what your neighbor said is true, Sally's son has more problems than raging hormones. He also may be a Peeping Tom. Since peeping and prowling can escalate, the police should be notified. It appears that the boy needs help, and his mother is in denial. Do not procrastinate. You must protect yourself.

DEAR ABBY: My boyfriend, "Roy," and I have been dating almost a year. We are both 21 but have known each other since we were 8. Lately, his mother has been making hurtful comments like, "Wow, you're not dressed like a slut today," or "How come you're always here when I come to see my son?"

I don't want to be disrespectful, but her comments are insulting. I don't dress like an extra in a music video. Having been brought up in a Christian home, and still living in one, I know the difference between cute clothes and trashy attire.

These comments from Roy's mother started when he and I began dating. I don't know if it's my clothes she hates, or if it's the fact that Roy and I are considering taking the next step.

It also bothers me that Roy doesn't say anything when his mother rips me to shreds. My mother told me to keep my distance from Roy's mom and make sure he knows how I feel about his silence.

Roy is a "mama's boy," so I don't expect him to say anything to his mother. I don't even expect him to understand how I feel. I just want to know the proper way to handle things the next time his mom criticizes me.

THE GIRLFRIEND

DEAR GIRLFRIEND: Roy's mother sees you as a threat. Her comments are intended to drive you away. Unless Roy speaks up, her behavior will escalate. If you continue to tolerate her behavior, Roy's mother will make your life hell. And if you marry him, she will rule the roost.

Explain to Roy how hurtful his mother's comments are. Tell him that you will no longer tolerate them, and the next time she insults you, you will say, "Roy how do YOU feel about the way your mother is talking to me? Do you agree with her?" Make it clear that if he fails to stand up for you and tell his mother that he expects you to be treated with respect, the relationship is over.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$10 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in price.)



AP

Actress Molly Shannon, left, poses as her companion Fritz Chesnut, takes a picture at the TV Guide Awards on Feb. 24, 2001, in Los Angeles.

Former 'SNL' star Shannon ties knot

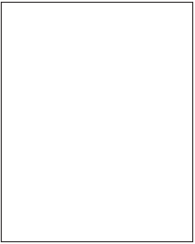
LOS ANGELES (AP)—It's no joke: Former "Saturday Night Live" performer Molly Shannon has gotten married.

The 39-year-old comedian married artist Fritz Chesnut in a private ceremony Saturday at the Four Seasons Hotel in Santa Barbara. The couple has an 8-month-old daughter, Stella Shannon Chesnut.

Shannon was best-known in "SNL" sketches as nerdy Catholic schoolgirl Mary Katherine Gallagher, a role she also played in the 1999 movie "Superstar."

Her other movies include "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," "Wet Hot American Summer," "Serendipity" and "Osmosis Jones."

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